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Aura-ting the Nation: The Past as Paradox in Japanese Enka Song

by

Shelina Louise Brown ©

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Abstract

It is my position that *enka* is an art form that serves to 'aurate' the Japanese nation into existence within the cultural imaginary of the Japanese people. As an auration, *enka* necessarily evokes a vision of a shared Japanese past as an answer to present ontological deficiencies and uncertainties – for example, the sense of social unrest felt due to the intensive westernization of Japanese culture. The projection of essential 'Japaneseness' within the genre of *enka* is, however, a somewhat confusing process, for the genre of *enka* is itself a hybrid musical style containing both western and Japanese elements. Through a close examination of representative *enka* songs, I hope to disentangle some of the complex, and often paradoxical processes that are inherent in this musical and poetic form.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this product of many nights' lucubrations to my mother, Janice Brown, for all of her tireless support and encouragement. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my two new family members, Alice and Kiki, with whom I hope to share many more nights of fruitful discussion on such grave matters as aesthetic theory and the finer points of lettuce appreciation.

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Introduction

All future is past... All past things have futurity.

- Walter Benjamin from "The Metaphysics of Youth" (1914)

An enigmatic, eclectic, and often, I would venture, poetic thinker, the works of Benjamin dazzle the reader with their anachronistically postmodern mélange of metaphysical aphorisms and perplexing incongruities. As a scholar who in many ways eludes disciplinary categorization, Benjamin constituted a bewildering presence in the modernist academic environment of early twentieth-century Europe. And yet, it is precisely this bewildering quality that lends his work continued relevance within the confused, nebulous 'post'-world we imagine ourselves to inhabit today.

To say that 'all future is past, and that all past things have futurity', is far from tautology, although the aphoristic construction of this statement may cause confusion in its interpretation. In the context of my thesis, I will choose to read Benjamin's words according to the following logic: our collective future is defined by the way in which we imagine the past; and an examination of past 'things', or cultural products, is necessary to understand the way in which we, at the present moment, are projecting the 'past' onto such objects. Our collective futurity depends on our ability to discern processes of 'past creation', which in turn define our present situation and our future directionality.

For Benjamin, 'past things', or cultural objects of the past, are in possession of a decaying 'aura' that needs to be rescued from complete ruination; the 'aura' of the past must be preserved in the face of rampant capitalist mass production and commodity fetishism. The decayed, or decaying 'aura', may thus be interpreted as a deficiency that Benjamin senses within modern capitalist society at large: an ontological deficiency that he projects onto cultural 'past' objects. The 'aura', then, comes to represent Benjamin's irreconcilable longing for a complete, authentic, culturally homogenous past - - a nostalgic desire for a time when the sublime Mona Lisa, revered by all, could not be replicated en masse, nor tarnished by the irreverent mustache to which she was later subjected. Needless to say, such a vision of the past is paradoxical in that it represents an imaginary constituted by *present* desires, transposed onto a past historical moment. The 'aura' is thus not so much a decaying property of a static object, but a constant process of 'past projection' onto said object. To acknowledge the importance of this subtle yet poignant distinction, in the context of this thesis I have chosen to coin the subsidiary terms, 'aurate' and 'auration', to indicate the processual acts of 'past projection' occurring within cultural media.

While an auration can occur within the imagination of an individual observer/critic who projects a vision of an imagined past onto a work of art, it can also be a phenomenon occurring within the work of art itself. In the case of Japanese enka song, for instance, we find an entire contemporary musico-poetic form that revolves around the evocation of, and the longing for, an imagined past. Each enka song aurates (within an 'aural' medium) a vision of a culturally unified, albeit distant, Japanese past. Within a musical context, this phenomenon of auration is entangled in a complex web of interwoven imaginaries – that of performer, listener, and songwriter/composer. This interlacing web comes to ensnare a substantial portion of Japanese society, as the cultural imaginary of Japan is indubitably pervaded by sounds of enka.

It is often said that enka is 'the essence of Japan', and yet seldom is this emphatic statement placed under critical scrutiny. It is my position that enka is an art form that serves to aurate the Japanese nation into existence within the cultural imaginary of the Japanese people. As an auration, enka necessarily evokes a vision of a shared Japanese past as an answer to present ontological deficiencies and uncertainties – for example, the sense of social unrest felt due to the intensive westernization of Japanese culture. In the context of enka, the auration of the past is thus inextricably linked to a longing for unified, homogenous, national, 'Japanese' culture. The projection of essential 'Japaneseness' within the genre of enka is, however, a somewhat confusing process, for the genre of enka is itself a hybrid musical style containing both western and Japanese elements. Through a close examination of enka, I hope to disentangle some of the complex, and often paradoxical processes that are inherent in this musical and poetic form.

In this thesis, I will employ a historically informed analysis of enka songs and song-texts, in order to uncover the ways in which the Japanese past is evoked as a contemporary auration. The introductory chapter will detail the theoretical approach to be employed in my analysis. The first two sections of this first chapter will focus on modernist[1] anthropological/historical theories of nationhood and nationalism, dealing primarily with the central paradox of the nation as a simultaneously 'new' and 'historical' imagined formation. Next, I will move to a discussion of how such theories of nationalism may be applicable to an analysis of the Japanese nation-state. Lastly, I would like to return to a more in-depth consideration of Benjamin's theory of the aura as expressed in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and how this theory may be applied to a Japanese cultural context, and also to a musico-poetic context. The final two chapters will be comprised of my analyses of enka songs: the second chapter will focus on enka songs from the Taishō era (1912 – 1926), when the genre of enka first crystallized, and the third chapter will include analyses of more contemporary enka from the post-war era to the economic boom-time of the 1980's. It is my intention that in the spirit of Benjamin, I may arrive at some insightful conclusions concerning the contemporary relevance of enka by employing a theoretical framework drawing together the diverse disciplines of cultural studies, anthropology, history, literature and musicology.

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[1] In the disciplines of history and anthropology, 'modernist' theories of nationalism refer to the works of scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Ernst Gellner, who maintain that nationalism arose after 1800, with the onset of modernization. According to such theorists, modern social conditions such as capitalism, urbanization, industrialization, are associated with the rise of nationalism. While

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I will choose to refer to the 'nation' as a modern construct, in line with scholars such as Anderson, it worthy to note that some scholars extend the notion of 'modernity', and thus the associated emergence of 'the modern nation', to the onset of colonial expansionism and mercantilism. I believe that both interpretations are equally valid, depending on the historical scope of one's study. For the purposes of my thesis, I will be examining the modern nation in its twentieth-century manifestation. As such, I will be following the 'modernist' anthropological definition of the nation – this is not to say that the roots of modern nationalism cannot be traced back to earlier historical epochs.

Chapter 1:

Towards a Theoretical Framework for Discussing Enka and the Japanese Nation

I. Destiny, by Chance?: Anderson's Imaginings and the Paradox of Nationhood

> If nation-states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical', the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny (Anderson, 11 - 12).

The magic of the human imagination perhaps lies in its miraculous ability to override the countless paradoxical and conflicting logics that potentially stand in the way of a comfortable false consciousness. In the above quote from *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson points out that the contemporary belief in the timeless 'nation' exemplifies such an instance of a particular ideology that is widely maintained despite obvious incongruities in its temporal logic. In my reading of Anderson, it seems that a fundamental incongruity that threatens to destabilize the very foundations of a nationalistic ideology is that of the nation's simultaneous 'newness' and 'historicity'; that is, while the 'nation-state' is a political formation brought into existence by means of relatively *recent* socio-political interactions, its corresponding cultural expression, 'the nation', a likewise contemporary, albeit imagined formation, is believed to have been in existence since time 'immemorial'.

If logic prevailed, one would assume that an ideology of nationhood built on such contradictory grounds would soon deconstruct, laying bare its internal inconsistencies that render it incompatible with the most basic tenets of human reason - after all, that which is 'new' cannot also be 'old'. In practice, however, we find that peoples' conception of time and history is not so much a real or chronological measure as it is an expression of psychological, deeply subjective experience. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson analyzes historical as well as literary texts as a means of uncovering the ways in which the modern ideologies of nationhood have come to alter peoples' ontological sense of time and place. The nation is thus an 'imagined community': a socially constructed formation imagined into existence by those who perceive themselves to be a part of that group. In looking to the literary cultural products of the imagined community, or the nation, Anderson shows that the nation is just as much an internal, aesthetic imagining, as it is an external, geo-political configuration. Employing a broad interdisciplinary approach, Anderson demonstrates that there are complex linguistic and literary processes behind nationalistic imaginings, and that such processes need to be interrogated in depth rather than dismissed and relegated to the arcane realm of 'magic', nor to the serendipitous vagaries of 'chance'. Anderson's previously quoted supposition, then, that the belief in the timeless nation is brought about purely by means of social 'magic', can be read as a facetious assertion which flippantly contradicts the major critical objective of *Imagined Communities*.

While Anderson's work is invaluable in that it marks an attempt to incorporate literary cultural products within a historical discussion of the rise of nationalism, one notable concern, for a student of both literature and musicology, is that of Anderson's reliance on textual and (to a much lesser extent) visual artistic media to support his claims. An analysis of popular music and song texts may add a new, 'third' dimension to such a two-dimensional, text-based study of nationalism: namely, an inclusion of music and musical experience within discourse on nationalism may allow for an examination of such an ideology as an affective process rather than a detached textual phenomenon.

The shift towards studying nationalism as an affective process is an intentional political statement as well as an academic decision. Anderson's tendency to regard nationalism as an objectified textual phenomenon implies the presence of a scrutinizing gaze of a default-male historian. A result of Anderson's objectification of nationalistic processes is his tendency to consider nationalism as a universal form, without considering the multiplicity of ways in which the nation can be imagined by diverse individuals.[1] In proposing an alternative to Anderson's vision of nationalism, cultural anthropologist Matthew Fox chooses to regard nationalism as a continuously unfolding process of identity formation:

> …national culture is malleable and mobile. It is the outcome of a constant process of cultural production. A national culture is constantly being moulded as individuals and groups confront their social worlds and try to (re)form them (2).

Following this proposition, I would like to approach the subject of nationalism as an investigation into the processual nature of nationalistic imaginings. My primary concern in this thesis is thus to investigate *how* the previously identified paradox of the nation as amalgam of 'newness' and 'historicity' comes to be resolved within the imaginings of a nation, and in particular, within the musical and poetic culture of a nation. In other words, the question I believe needs to be further addressed, in a musico-literary context, is that of *how*, if not by 'chance', do we arrive at our national destiny? And further, to what extent is this 'destiny' an imagining of things to come, or a fabricated vision of a past that never was?

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[1] This critique of Anderson's universalism is expressed by Bruce Kapferer in *Legends of People, Myths of State*, and recapitulated in Fox's article. The connection between text-based methodology, objectification and universalism is my own.

II. Another Fold in the Paradox: Gellner and the Nation as Longing for Impossible Homogeneity

> Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist ... (Gellner, 168).

Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as an imagined, or socially constructed entity, owes much to the theories of Ernst Gellner. An idiosyncratic thinker on the subject of nationalism, Ernst Gellner's work provides further insight into the paradoxical imaginings that constitute nationalistic formations. Published in 1964, roughly three decades before Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Gellner's chapter entitled "Nationalism" in *Thought and Change*, expresses the seemingly counter-intuitive view that nationalism is not a sentiment expressed by pre-existing nations; rather, it creates nations where they did not previously exist. In this Gellnerian position, we see the roots of Anderson's later, social constructivist theory of the nation as a formation that is imagined into existence.

In his discussion of nationalism, Gellner takes as his starting point the observation that the nation is a formation of contemporary origin, a "historical oddity" that is nonetheless naturalized as a necessary category of identification for those who inhabit the modern world (151).[2] For Gellner, the importance of nationality, or nationhood, can be linked to the erosion of social 'structure' within modern urban societies. In the context of Gellner's work, 'structure' is an anthropological term that refers to the structure of a traditional, or pre-industrial society, in which an individual's identity is determined according to life-long, static social roles and face-to-face community interactions. As society moves towards industrial, urban life, however, its 'structure' erodes, as "a very large proportion of one's relationships and encounters… [come to be] ephemeral, [and] non-repetitive"(Gellner, 155). In the face of such etiolation of traditional 'structure', Gellner posits that societies need to standardize an effective, context-free mode of social communication. As a result, the 'nation' comes into existence as society is pressured "towards a standard culture based on a written vernacular which is congruent with the state"(Breuilly, xxiv). The pressurizing, homogenizing force at play in this situation is that of nationalism. Nationalistic forces bring about the inevitable convergence of state, population and culture that comes to be naturalized in the modern world. The nation is thus an 'invention' of cultural homogenizing forces within a society facing the upheavals of industrialization.[3]

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[2] The idea of the nation as an 'invented tradition' is taken up by E.J. Hobsbawm, who investigates the processes by which the "historically novel... [and] far from universal" entity of the modern nation comes to be naturalized in contemporary societies (Hobsbawm, 6).

[3] Gellner also posits that a society may feel the need to homogenize its mode of social communication in order to resist exploitation at the hands of more powerful, culturally homogenized nation states. Further, Gellner argues that nationalistic movements often arise when industrialization and modernization spread unevenly, prompting social groups to homogenize their respective national cultures in order to distinguish themselves from a dominant, more advanced group. The Meiji Restoration may be interpreted as such an instance of a vulnerable social group seeking to homogenize its national culture in order to resist exploitation by an encroaching foreign

The perceived need for homogeneity within modern society, of course, may be considered a response to its disjunctive, hybrid, and increasingly heterogeneous social reality. Buried within Gellner's somewhat meandering chapter on the rise of nationalism, is the following brief quotation:

> The self-image of nationalism involves the stress of folk, folk-lore.. etc. In fact, nationalism becomes important precisely when these things become artificial (162).

Even though Gellner downplays the significance of this comment, referring to it as a trifling, "amusing fact", in my reading this little aside points to an observation of critical significance (162). If we should interpret 'folk' culture as the traditional cultural 'structure' of a homogenous society, then it appears that Gellner has touched upon an intriguing paradox: namely, according to Gellner's historical observations, nationalism emerges as a cynosure of cultural homogeneity and unity in the imaginings of a peoples precisely at a point in history when such cultural homogeneity and unity are no longer possible.[4] Nationalistic evocation of folk, or traditional culture, then, implies an impossible longing for a traditional cultural homogeneity that can no longer be experienced within the modern world. Not only is it impossible to attain the object of this nationalistic longing, it is self-contradictory and even paradoxical in that it exalts, and even fetishizes an ideal past as the answer to contemporary social instability.

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nation(s). I will discuss in further detail the applicability of Gellner and Anderson's theories to the Japanese cultural context in the following section of this introductory chapter.

[4] In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson makes a similar observation, stating that nationalism is "a consciousness that arose when it was no longer possible to experience the nation as new, at the wave-top moment of rupture" (Anderson, 203). This statement is made within a discussion of the emergence of an imagined past of antebellum racial fraternity in American literature. The paradoxical implications of this statement are not taken up for further analysis.

Gellner's assertion that folk culture becomes 'artificial' within the modern nation may be interpreted according to Jean Baudrillard's argument concerning the emergence of the ethnic, or cultural simulacrum. Although Baudrillard's theories deal with contemporary globalization and late capitalism, the modern origins of the simulacrum may be traced back to the modern nation's idealization of traditional folk cultures. Nationalism, in this Baudrillardian context, may be thought of as a ghostly evocation of a cultural simulacrum. Just as a simulacrum comes to be removed from the reality it once signified, so does the nation's folk culture come to be disassociated from the 'real' folk culture it once represented. Nationalism assumes folk culture to be ethnically, socially, and in all other aspects, *homogenous*. According to this idealized vision of past folk cultures, within the highly 'structured' world of pre-industrial village life, each member of society naturally conformed to similar ideals, spoke the same language and accepted the cultural dominance of a ruling elite according to a rigid class system. Whether or not this was actually the real lived experience of the pre-industrial era is effectively beside the point: what comes to be important is the simulacra of the unified cultural past – this is the eidolon that is conjured through nationalistic discourse, and nationalistic cultural products.[5]

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[5] In 1927, Taishō era Romantic Japanese poet, *Kitahara Hakushū* commented the following in regards to Japanese folk music: "Japanese folk songs, once the voice of the people and the land, have since the Meiji period [1868 – 1912] largely lost their local colour and folkness [*yachō*]... Authentic [*seichō*] folk songs which still preserve their original dignity are extremely rare" (Hughes, 1990: 13). We thus see that as early as 1927, any vestiges of 'authentic' Japanese folk culture were all but vanished in the face of urbanization and the subsequent nationalization of Japanese music culture. In the place of authentic folk music, enka emerges as the dominant song form. Enka is of course a hybrid genre sounding a simulacrum of Japanese folk music within a largely western musical context. I will further explicate this application of Gelllner and Baudirallard to enka song in Chapter 2 and 3.

As is the case with most simulacra, in the case of the idealized vision of the homogenous national past, the ghost of reality comes to have more substance than the discarded, forgotten, 'real' reality. It follows, too, that the very impossibility of homogeneity in the modern world serves only to increase the desire for cultural unification. The language Gellner employs to describe the pervasive force of nationalistic longing lends itself well to psychoanalytic interpretation. In his chapter on "Nations and Nationalism," Gellner goes as far as to set up a dichotomy between nationalism and human reason, evoking the Nietzschean dichotomy of Apollonian vs. Dionysian aspects of the human psyche. According to Gellner, nationalism is a dark, 'atavistic force' that defies human reason:

> Man is a prey to his dark Gods… These Dark Gods include, apparently, the call of ethnic or territorial loyalty (149).

If one were to rephrase Gellner's observations in psychoanalytic terms, the affect of nationalism may be interpreted as a desire for a cultural and social 'oneness' that can never be realized, except within an imagined shared past. The homogenous past can therefore be conceived of as a kind of pre-Oedipal phase in a nation's development, when the individual social agent has yet to sever his/her umbilical tie to the national folk culture. However, whereas a pre-Oedipal phase refers to a real period in a child's development, the shared past of the nation-state is an imaginary, *present* projection, a fantasized pre-Oedipal phase that never was. The myth of the homogenous past is thus a particularly comforting, womb-like delusion; it is the idealized infancy of the nation, not its real childhood. And yet, this delusion seems to be a necessary component of the modern nation; the comfort of this dream world is what the atavistic dark gods crave. Indeed, it is perhaps the dream of the shared past that makes the harsh reality of a fragmented, uncertain, culturally disjunctive nation bearable – just as a psychoanalyst may claim that it is the dream of the pre-Oedipal womb that compels us through the vicissitudes of adult life.

The modernist theories of both Anderson and Gellner open up the discussion of nationalism to many intriguing possibilities and associations. In my analysis of these two theorists I have chosen to focus on the often contradictory operations at work within nationalistic imaginings. In my interpretation, at the heart of such operations is the dual paradox of the nation's simultaneous newness and historicity, and its irreconcilable longing for an impossible homogeneity; both of these aspects of the identified 'paradox of nationalism' are apparent in the ways in which the national past is imagined.

In his article entitled, "The Past as a Scarce Resource," Arjun Appadurai posits that "the past [is not] an infinite and plastic symbolic resource... [there are] culturally variable sets of norms whose function is to regulate the inherent debatability of the past"(2). This statement reflects Appadurai's position as expressed in *Modernity at Large*, that "the imagination [is] a social practice"(31). That is, if we consider the past to be a largely imagined, and thus 'debatable', concept, then it follows that the past should be imagined according to certain social regulatory discourses. Nationalism may be thought of as such a regulatory discourse which shapes the cultural imaginary of a given social group. Regulatory norms, or discourses are not static standards, but rather they are continuously occurring processes; the past is thus continuously reborn through present actions and imaginings. Cultural Anthropologists George Clement and Angela Gilliam have argued that representations of the past "contain ideological and hegemonic properties that represent historical and sectional interests. In no way simple, they express a high degree of social and poetic complexity"(1). In the context of this thesis I would like to thus uncover some of the 'social and poetic' processes of past projection as occurring within Japanese enka song - - an art form that is actively involved in projecting a vision of a nostalgic, distant, unified national past as an essential component of the Japanese cultural imaginary.

III. The Particular Case of the Japanese Imaginary: Self-Orientalism and the Construction of the Japanese Nation

Given that the act of imagining may be thought of as a social process, it is paramount that a study of the cultural imaginary envisioned in enka song takes into account the specific cultural and historical context of Japan. While Anderson and Gellner theorize the broad, international phenomenon that is nationalism, it is necessary to qualify how such theories may or may not be applicable to an analysis of the rise of the Japanese nation. Contrary to what one would assume, however, identifying a specifically 'Japanese cultural context' can be a slippery, and often confounding operation. If it is the case that all modern nations are essentially hybrid imagined realities woven together by an intricate warp and weft of cultural interactions, then how does the socially conscious researcher untangle the skeins of 'Japan' from the interposing threads of western influence, in order to isolate a specifically 'Japanese' object of study?

At the onset of this thesis project, my intention was to investigate the concomitant eastern and western influences present in the hybrid musico-poetic form of enka. The more I sought to isolate the eastern from the western, however, I came to realize that I was constantly left with an irresoluble chicken-and-the-egg dilemma: that is, which came first, the nation of Japan, or its contact with the west? To argue that 'Japan is merely a western construction' may be considered a polemically Orientalist and altogether deplorable viewpoint; however, upon closer consideration, the assertion that 'Japan exists as an essential entity singularly apart from the West' may be a more delusory and thus damaging position. These two alternative readings of Japanese social history may be labeled as Orientalist and self-Orientalist respectively. It is my position that enka song evokes the latter, self-Orientalist cultural imaginary; and as a result, the hybrid western constitutive elements of enka come to be disregarded, or effectively drowned out, as the genre is proclaimed a musico-poetic form encapsulating the essence of the Japanese '*kokoro*' (heart/soul).

In this thesis my aim is to uncover the contradictory processes behind such self-Orientalistic cultural imaginings; although I will choose to refer to enka as stemming from a relatively 'Japanese' context, it is my underlying supposition that this identified 'Japanese context' is always already made up of a hybrid fabric of east-west cultural interactions. Returning to the overarching, global theorizations of Anderson and Gellner, and their applicability to such a 'Japanese' context, in my following historical analysis I intend to show that the previously identified Andersonian and Gellnerian paradoxes of nationhood are highly relevant to a socio-historical analysis of the Japanese nation. In addition, however, it is my view that the often counter-intuitive processes of self-Orientalism represent yet another instance of paradox in the Japanese imaginary.

The Japanese nation is thus produced through multiple paradoxical twistings of the social imagination - - and enka music is to be my entry point into this troubling whirr of cultural torsion.

In my following discussion of Japanese history, I would like to briefly cover two moments in the establishment of the Japanese nation that particularly demonstrate the paradoxical and self-Orientalistic tendencies inherent in Japanese nationalistic imaginings: the Meiji Restoration and the post-war years immediately following U.S. occupation. The self-Orientalistic tendencies exhibited within the rhetoric of these two eras colour the intermittent years of Japanese history. Further, these two periods marked pivotal moments in the development of enka as a contemporary musical genre. The origins of enka can be traced to the arrival of western musical influences in the early Meiji era; and enka's contemporary lexicon was largely established in the years following the end of U.S. occupation. Enka can therefore be seen - or 'heard', perhaps, - as a musico-poetic form that was directly inflected by the effects of Japan's cultural interactions with the West, and thus inextricably linked to the intensified cultural exchange of the Meiji, and later post-war years.

Due to its isolationist foreign policy, Japan's contact with the West was severely curtailed until the mid-19th century. Prior to the establishment of permanent trade relations with the West following the arrival of Commodore Perry (1854), Japan was a feudal-esque, *bakufu* state[6] comprised of rivalling factions. The territory which would come to be known as 'Japan' (*Nihon*) was inhabited by various peoples who spoke various different dialects and whose regional cultures differed greatly.[7] Throughout the course of early Japanese history, Japan constituted a relatively nebulous, amorphous presence in East Asia, referred to as 'the lands east of China'.[8] Despite the centralised imperial governance of the medieval Heian period, and the later, overarching rule of the Tokugawa Shōgunate, it would be an anachronism to claim that the diverse cultural groups inhabiting pre-Restoration 'Japan' saw themselves as a unified nation with a clearly defined character, or homogenous identity.

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[6] "Strictly, *feudal* is a word historians use to describe the granting of a fief or area of land by a lord to his vassal in return for military service; but it has also come to mean, more loosely, a society where peasants cultivate the land and pay taxes in goods to the local lord and not to a central government" (Williams, 13). "In 1850's [Japan,] members of the ruling class, the lords' and their *samurai* remained bound to each other by ties of vassalage and for the most part exacted from the

Nonetheless, the *bakufu*'s policy of *sakoku*, or 'closed country', maintained the Japanese peoples' relative isolation from foreign economic and political influence. Standard historiography thus presents a closed country (*sakoku*) that is violently 'opened' by the aggressive intrusion of Commodore Perry's Blackships. The language used in such western historiography is often imbued with sexual overtones, indicating that the 'opening' of Japan has been interpreted by western male historians according to a colonialist narrative trope of

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peasant a portion of the crop as feudal dues. On the other hand, it would now more often be argued that in other respects Japan was ceasing to be feudal, having developed in was for which medieval Europe offers no close parallel.. The lords domains were in size and organization more like princedoms than fiefs.. the exercise of power, both national and local, was substantially bureaucratic."(Beasely, 3). Japan was thus organized into highly advanced feudal sates, governed by lords known as daimyo. The daimyo comprised the *bakufu* state that answered to the Tokugawa Shōgunate based in Edo (Old Tokyo).

[7] These regional dialects and cultural distinctions still exist in Japan. However, national culture has been centralized and standardized around Tokyo, making *hyōjungo* (Tokyo dialect) the dominant mode of speech. *Hyōjungo* is a preferred mode of speech comparable to 'High German', or the 'Queen's English'.

[8] This information regarding Japanese early history is gleaned from Ian Buruma's *Inventing Japan: 1853 – 1964*, p. 1 – 6.

male sexual conquest over a passive, feminized Other.[9] The reality of the circumstances surrounding Japan's 'deflowerment' at the hands of the western naval brigade, however, is much more complex. Regrettably, for the purposes of this thesis, I will not be able to enter into a detailed discussion of the complexities of Japanese cultural interaction with the west prior to the arrival of Commodore Perry. However, I would like to stress two key points raised by revisionist historian Ian Buruma that counter the standard historical narrative: first, while it is true that the vulnerability of the Edo *bakufu* was revealed by Perry's superior military power, pressure from surrounding foreign naval vessels had been mounting for some time during the course of the 1800's. In effect, Perry was merely the man who "brought the existing problem to a head"(4). Second, Japan's isolation has largely been exaggerated. Due to the presence of *rangakusha* (Dutch scholars) in *bakufu* Japan, "the Japanese knew more about the West than most other Asians did, including the Chinese... the extent of their knowledge of American and British politics, of Western science, medicine, history, and geography was truly remarkable"(Buruma, 5). It may be said, then, that Japan was a *sakoku* insofar as trade relations were restricted, but in terms of acquiring cultural and scientific information, the doors were never firmly closed to the West.[10]

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[9] Even the often up-to-date Wikipedia is suspect in this regard: the article entitled 'End of Seclusion' under "Japanese History" states: "This policy of isolation lasted for more than 200 years, until, on July 8, 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy with four warships: the Mississippi, Plymouth, Saratoga, and Susquehanna, steamed into the bay at Edo, old Tokyo, and *displayed the threatening power of his ship's cannon*." (emphasis added).

[10] Japan's cultural exchange with the west during the years of *sakoku* is a complex topic that I have oversimplified for the purposes of this thesis. The debate over 'how much western influence should be allowed in Japan' was ongoing during the *sakoku* years. Many rivalling factions within

Dispelling the myth of the *sakoku* is a key step in deconstructing Orientalist and self-Orientalist essentialisms of 'Japan' and 'Japanese' culture. Realizing that western foreign influence was present in Japan for quite some time before the 'opening' of the country, and that the territory constituting Japan was inhabited by disparate cultural and linguistic groupings, complicates the researcher's ability to discern what is 'Japanese', or what comprises an essentially 'Japanese' context. The crux of the matter is that 'Japan' is a modern creation, and any essentialist attributes assigned to this creation are more a reflection of modern, culturally hybrid values than what may be termed 'essential', or traditional Japanese customs, beliefs, or practises.

In the chapter entitled "The Japanese Discovery of Japan," in *Alternative Narratives of Japanese History*, William Steele observes that "the Japanese collective self was defined after its encounter with the Other"(19). While this argument could be made for any emerging nation, or national identity, it is particularly true in the case of Japan. In Europe, the nation seems to have arisen organically, and to have grown up, so to speak, gradually over time; the Japanese nation, however, was forced into existence under radically different circumstances.[11] As Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, nationalistic movements arose across Europe throughout the course of the 19th

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the *bakufu* government had differing views on the topic. Depending on who was in power, western knowledge would be alternately either highly restricted or moderately tolerated.

[11] This is not to say, of course, that Marxian 'quantitative and qualitative leaps' did not occur within the history of the emergence of European nationalism/nations. My point is that such 'leaps' are part of a constant ebb/flow of socio-political flux. Thus, the emergence of nation-states across Europe followed a 'domino-effect' type wave pattern, whereas the emergence of the Japanese nation was a sudden jolt from nebulous political isolation to 'instant' nation-state, via the Meiji Restoration.

century, following the rise of print capitalism, the dissolution of feudalism and the decline of the Catholic Church.[12] In the case of Japan, however, the nation was effectively forced into existence by economic, military and political pressure from the West – symbolized in western historiography by the powerful cannons that Commodore Perry brandishes as he sails into a passive, defenceless Japan. Japanese nationhood was thus a concept adopted out of necessity; it was not a socio-historical process that arose over the course of a century – it was in many ways a hurried, concerted effort to defend Japan's autonomy in the face of western colonialism. To return to Steele's quote, then, it may be said that 'the Japanese collective self was defined after its encounter with an aggressive, menacing, economically dominant, Other'

This concerted effort to assert a strong, unified Japanese identity was known as The Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin).* Although the term 'restoration' refers specifically to the restoration of the Emperor as supreme ruler of Japan, it also implied a complete revolution in the political, social, and cultural life of the nation – in effect, it was the first time that Japan came to be defined as a 'nation'. The choice of the word 'restoration' has notable implications with respect to past projection and the birth of Japan. To 'restore' signifies a return to a past moment. The drive behind the Meiji Restoration was thus a move to congeal a Japanese national identity by evoking a powerful, communal shared history of Japanese past imperial, national glory.

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[12] Anderson is not the only anthropologist who shares this view. Other scholars who follow this school of thought are known as modernization theorists, indicating that they link the emergence of modern social conditions with the rise of nationalism. This school of thought is represented by scholars such as Gellner, E.J Hobsbawm, and Bruce Kapferer. The opposing school of thought is known as 'primitivism', comprised of scholars who maintain that nationalistic sentiment was present since the beginning of human history. It is my perception that the 'primitivist' school is reactionary, over-simplistic, and highly problematic in its analysis of nationalism, and thus I have not included this perspective in my thesis.

Anderson's paradox of the nation's simultaneous 'newness' and 'historicity' provides a frame for analyzing the *Meiji ishin*. From its originating moment in the Meiji Constitution, the Japanese nation was a tenably 'new' formation, whose validity was ostensibly guaranteed by its paradoxical 'historicity'. The Meiji imperial nation's 'historicity' was paradoxical in that the 'restoration' of the Emperor did not mark a return to the historical *Heian* imperial system, but rather, it marked the inception of an entirely new, culturally hybrid form of political organization, largely borrowed from western models of constitutional monarchy.

The Gellnerian paradox of 'impossible homogeneity' is also present in the rhetoric surrounding the new Meiji order. The establishment of the new Meiji nation as 'historical', was inextricably linked to the evocation of an imagined Japanese past of cultural homogeneity. The major aspect of this imagined past homogeneity involved the invention of a unified Japanese Shintō religious tradition. Despite centuries of Shintō practise throughout Japan, at the time of the Meiji Restoration, Shintōism remained a heterogeneous religious practise comprised of various regional sects. Shintō is a multifaceted religion that has been shaped by Japanese contact with Buddhism, Taoism, cultures of the South Pacific and South Asia, Mongolia, Ainu (a northern Japanese indigenous tribe), and most recently, Christianity.[13] The eight-hundred myriad deities (*yao-yorozu-no-kami*), of Shintōism "indicat[e] a belief in a vast and indefinite [divinity]" (Holton, 41). It is thus no surprise that a wide array of gods are worshipped by various regional Shintō cults, and that "local rites and ceremonies present[ed] a richly variegated picture depending on different geographical areas"(Holton, 41).[14] Despite such regional differences in Shintō practise, the Japanese government has somewhat succeeded in "introducing sufficient uniformity into the activities of the shrines to make it possible to say that... State Shintō ..now appears as a unified system of belief and practice relative to sacred things"(Holton, 40).

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[13] Some contemporary scholars of Japanese religions claim that "it is nonsensical... to talk of Shintō as though it exist[s] as an independent religion at... any.. stage in Japanese history"(Breen and Teeuwen, 4). Such scholars maintain that Shintō has evolved symbiotically with Taoism and

The attempt to nationalize heterogeneous, sectarian Shintō religious practise as 'National, or State Shintō' posed a great challenge for the Meiji government. The motivation behind this drive to centralize Shintō was largely tied to the nationalistic drive to centralize national culture according to self-Orientalistic precepts.[15] Historian Ian Buruma summarizes the records left by a

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Buddhism, and thus cannot be separated from these religious discourses. The drive to establish Shinō as an indigenous religion of Japan did not begin until the late Edo period, with the writings of Motoori Norinaga (1730 - 1801), prior to this, religious officials in Japan accepted that Shintō was a religious practise existing under the 'over-arching principle' of Buddhism (Breen and Teeuwen, 4).

[14] Cambridge scholar, Richard Bowring has written an extensive tome on the complex history of religious culture in Japan, beginning with the arrival of Buddhism in 538, and the compilation of the often historically dubious *Nihon shoki* in 722. In his study of early Buddhist and Shintō development in Japan, Bowring observes that, with the arrival of Buddhism, there were repeated attempts to consolidate Japanese religious culture under a strict Buddhist hierarchy, but each attempt at such centralization of religious culture inevitably gave way to an acceptance of the more pluralistic reality of the Japanese peoples' worship practises. The relatively harmonious, and often symbiotic co-existence of various Shintō practises and Buddhist ones throughout the course of early Japanese history can perhaps be linked to the relative 'openness' of the popular interpretation of each religion.

[15] This is not to say, of course, that self-Orientalism was the sole guiding impetus in the establishment of State Shintō, this is merely one possible means of interpreting the movement to nationalize a state religion in Japan. Historian Wilbur M. Fridell has written extensively on the movement to establish State Shintō. In the first chapter of his work, *Japanese Shrine Mergers: Sate Shintō Moves to the Grassroots*, he outlines the complex transmutations of the Japanese shrine system from the Meiji era in to the early twentieth-century. According to altering political and social climates throughout the Meiji era, State Shintō was repeatedly redefined and

noted *rangakusha* and political advisor to the Meiji state, regarding the Japanese government's decision to unify Japan under a centralized Shintō religion:

> Aizawa concluded the superior strength of European nations, which he was swift to recognize, was due to the Western faith. Christianity, as a state religion, he thought, made European subjects naturally obedient to their rulers. Belief in one God, he said, created national unity. State and church should go together. What Japan needed, then, was its own state religion, with the emperor as its highest priest. To this end, Shintō, as the most ancient Japanese creed, would be transformed into a national faith that welded all Japanese to gather under one roof. The Sun Goddess, as the sacred ancestor, would be worshipped as though she were an equivalent of the Christian God. Regrettably, the merging of church and state was to be one of the founding features of Japanese nationalism. The appeal was to tradition, but the model was European (13).

Buruma's last line, 'the appeal was to tradition, but the model was European,' touches upon the paradoxical, counter-intuitive processes of nationalistic imaginings. Under the Meiji Restoration we thus see a centralized simulacrum of 'traditional' Shinto religion come to usurp regional, folk religious practices in the new Japanese nation. The self-Orientalistic aims of the nationalization of Shintōism add yet another confounding instance of paradox in the Japanese social imaginings of the Meiji Restoration. As can be read in the previous Buruma quote, the actualization of Japanese nationhood has, from its beginnings in the Meiji Restoration, been a process of asserting an essentialist 'Japanese' identity through a western context. The interpretation of Japanese Shintō religion according to Christian, monotheistic terms highlights the processes of self-Orientalism inherent in the rhetoric of the Meiji Restoration.

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reinterpreted. For instance, while state-run shrines established under the Meiji Restoration fell out of favour with the largely Buddhist public in the 1870's, the liberal constitution of 1889, modeled after secular western constitutitons, was used to consolidate certain Shintō Shrines as secular hegemonic insitutions. While some shrines were declared to be State Shrines, others were disregarded as village shrines or non-state affiliated sectarian, *kyōkai*. My intent in raising the issue of State Shintō is not to enter into a discussion of the complexities of its historical development, but to point out in general terms, how the move to establish a state religion may be considered an instance of defining a national identity shaped by interaction with the West.

A confused paradoxical torsion thus seems to propel Japanese nationalistic imaginings into a vicious cycle of cultural self-destruction: the more vehemently Japan asserts itself to be 'Japan', it is effectively negating any vestiges of authentic, pre-Restoration Japanese culture. The act of national self-assertion may be interpreted as a mimicked colonial enterprise, and thus places the vulnerable territory, in this case that of Japan, in an ineluctable 'lose-lose' situation. It is paramount to keep in mind the unequal power relations between colonial western culture and traditional Japanese culture at the time of the Meiji Restoration. However, recognizing Japan's cultural hybridity is not necessarily tantamount to an admission of a deficiency on the part of Meiji national culture – in fact, the moment the researcher opens up 'Japan' to its multiple, culturally hybrid possibilities, is when an informed analysis of the complexity of cultural phenomena is truly possible.

The Meiji Restoration had great implications for the musical culture of Japan: both in terms of its westernization and national standardization. During the years immediately following the Meiji Restoration, we see the musical culture of Japan eagerly borrowing western musical models, and redefining Japanese musical expression in western terms. Military marching bands were the first to adopt western melodies, and later the newly nationalized Japanese school system adopted a curriculum of teaching children western music, mainly Scottish and Irish folk songs. In "Nations and Nationalism", Gellner argues that an emerging nation-state is driven by cultural homogenizing forces that seek to standardize socio-cultural communication within the new, modern social structure - the primary homogenizing force often manifests itself in the form of an urgent need for a national educational system (159). The Meiji drive to standardize and centralize a national educational system had profound implications for the social imaginary of Japan. In terms of the Japanese music culture of the times, children's ears quickly grew attuned to the western harmonies they were exposed to at schools. Curriculum advisers were crafty in their drive to westernize, and thereby 'modernize' Japanese musical taste: they first exposed children to western minor key melodies which most closely matched traditional Japanese folk melodies, and then gradually added more 'western' sounding tunes into the text-books. Within a generation, the ears of young Japan were adapted to western harmonies and melodic constructions. The regionally diverse traditions of Japanese folk music were thus pushed further and further into the margins of the national imaginary, and inevitably, it followed that the increasingly centralized, urbanized, and westernized Japanese nation was distanced from its own musical heritage.

The popular songs produced by the first generations of Japanese composers to graduate from the newly westernized musical education system came to be known as enka[16]. Early enka music was a hybrid genre consisting of melodies resembling Japanese traditional folk tunes, but set to a western harmonic progression. The subject matter of early enka ranged from the happy, jazzy, carefree tunes exalting the devil-may-care lifestyle of Tokyo's urban youth (*mobo* and *moga*), to the more heart-rending melodies evoking the voices of the marginalized and dispossessed, who bore the brunt of Japanese urbanization and westernization. Sad songs of separation, loss, and social injustice far outnumbered the upbeat enka, but both forms of enka nonetheless represent different aspects of the newly emerging Japanese nation. Backed by newly formed record companies, the popularity of enka songs grew exponentially over the mid to late Taisho era (1912 – 1926). Rather than the regional folk tunes played at traditional summer festivals, it was thus the mass-distributed enka records that came to sound the 'voice of Japan' - - the fact that this 'voice' was filtered through a western musical paradigm was conveniently disregarded, or perhaps, selectively *un*-imagined.

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[16] The precise origins of the term enka will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2. Enka can also be traced to *enzetsu*, a form of political chanting dating back to the Meiji period. It was not until the Taishō period that hybrid songs resembling contemporary enka were composed. It is these songs to which I am referring in this context.

Ironically, in the post-war years leading up to present day Japan, the hybrid genre of enka song can even be interpreted as a medium of Japanese resistance against American cultural imperialism. In order to explicate this position regarding the contemporary cultural politics of enka, I must first briefly outline the impact of post-war U.S. influence upon the Japanese cultural, and specifically musical, imaginary. During the World Wars, Japan had consolidated its national culture under a dogmatic imperial orthodoxy, the validity of which was guaranteed and justified by the 'brilliant' glory of Japan's unified Shintō past. The Emperor was believed to be a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, *amaterasu omikami*, and therefore he embodied god on earth.[17] As discussed previously, this Japanese national imaginary, rooted in the rhetoric of the Meiji Restoration, was a culturally hybrid construction – a social imagining of Japan through a western monotheistic exemplar. Nonetheless, the imperialist Shinto doctrine of the Meiji Restoration became a powerful means of indoctrinating the Japanese people with what was presented as an essentially Japanese identity, ordained by the Sun Goddess (hence, the choice of *Nihon*, meaning 'true sun', as the defining moniker for the new Japanese nation). The veneration of the Emperor fuelled the fire of Japan's unbridled military aggression. Shortly after Japan's defeat in World War II, however, the U.S. Occupying forces headed by General MacArthur forced Emperor Hirohito to renounce his godly status. Under U.S. occupation, Japan was thus once again to enter a period of intensive social, cultural, and political upheaval – but this time according to the strictures of U.S. cultural imperialism.

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[17] The evocation of the Sun Goddess may seem to imply an acknowledgment of pre-historic Japan's matriarchal social structure. However, this was not the case. *Amaterasu* was seen more as a divine mother, whose descendants gave birth to *Emperor Jimmu*, the mythical first Emperor of Japan. Thus, the act of rulership was firmly within the male domain. Taishō feminist Hiratsuka Raichō, however, attempts to reclaim the image of the Sun Goddess to promote a vision of empowered femininity within Japan.

The reconstruction of Japan according to western liberal democratic, capitalistic ideals was largely a project funded by the U.S., who sought to invent for themselves a secure ally in East Asia. The U.S. occupying forces forcibly effected changes in the core of Japan's political formations with the expressed intent of reshaping Japan's national imaginary. *The Columbia Guide to Modern Japanese History* states:

> ... the first steps toward cultural regeneration took place when the Allied occupiers forced them on the Japanese people... They abolished the state-guided organizations that had served as the vehicles for cultural orthodoxy... The Allies also broke up the Shinto hierarchy and abolished the bureaucratic organ that had tied the Shinto religion to the state. All these changes essentially destroyed the institutional context in which cultural orthodoxy had thrived (Allinson, 97).

As in the case of the Meiji Restoration, the U.S.-backed 're-generation' of Japan thus marked yet another encounter with an aggressive, dominant, western Other.

The era of U.S Occupation marked a double loss for Japan – the loss of the war, and the loss of national and cultural autonomy. Moreover, the widely held belief in the Emperor and in the essential greatness of *nihon* was shattered, bringing about a veritable identity crisis within the Japanese imaginary. This cultural trauma was exacerbated by the extreme poverty and social fragmentation of the post-war era. Due to large-scale urbanization and economic restructuring, communities faced heretofore unprecedented instances of disjuncture and segmentation. Allinson writes:

> In the social arena, segmentation affected communities, families, and individuals; youth, women, and the elderly. Segmentation promoted a wide-spread sense of detachment, both real and imagined, that frayed the social fabric and undercut cohesion.. Communities were especially prone to segmentation. Urbanization persisted after the 1950's and 60's, and cities continued to expand... With tens of thousands of new residents moved into a city each year, the community lost its cohesiveness....Detachment and mobility were thus two widespread characteristics of this urban society (Allinson 103 – 104).

Post-war Japan was thus a country characterized by disjuncture, disillusionment, and a loss of unified national identity.

As mentioned previously, however, this 'national identity' was originally a self-Orientalistic construction envisioned by Meiji intellectuals according to western models. Over the course of the war-time era, however, the reigning Japanese orthodoxy had succeeded in naturalizing this nationalistic mythology - rendering a simulacrum of Japanese culture to be a powerful 'reality'. Forcibly 'liberated' from the grips of this phantasm by the avuncular, yet ominous, colonial figure of General MacArthur, post-war Japan quickly replaced one western-based cultural simulacrum for a newer and more up-to-date model: namely, the 'Japan' that came to be envisioned in post-war rhetoric was that of a nation of diligent, hard-working Asian peoples, who managed to rebuild their nation by relying on a traditional 'Japanese' work ethic and moral code. A formidable body of academic and popular writings, known as *nihonjinron*, came to espouse this new, conveniently capitalism-friendly, 'essential' character of the Japanese peoples. A major proponent of such doctrine was the post-war prime minister of Japan, Yoshida Shigeru, who repeatedly propounded the myth that the successful rebuilding of Japan was due to the hard-working, group-oriented character of the Japanese. In reality, of course, the success of Japan was largely guaranteed by U.S. financial backing. Whereas the Meiji ideal of Japan as a nation tied to the irrevocable past glory of the imperial Shinto lineage marked a restoration of the emperor and a denial of the *bakufu*, it is ironic that upon the fall of the Emperor, Japan reverted to an essential character defined by values once espoused most strongly in the *bakufu* era of the Tokugawa Shōgunate, namely, that of the moral primacy of collective duty over personal will/desire (*giri-ninjō*).

Along with the economic development leading to the boom-time of the 1980's, enka music came to be consolidated into its contemporary lexicon.[18] It was at this time that enka assumed its contemporary social function as a projection of a traditional Japanese past. Enka was whole-heartedly embraced by the generations who lived through the end of the war, and the harsh post-war years of development. It was this generation that was most traumatized, perhaps, by the disillusionment following the war, and the resultant loss of a sense of 'Japaneseness'. Enka may thus be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim this lost Japanese past, or, in effect, the antidote to a lost Japanese present.

The choice to listen to enka may be interpreted as a choice to privilege an essential, traditional Japanese culture over the westernized j-pop which dominates much of contemporary Japanese music culture. This choice is made, more often than not, by middle aged, and senior Japanese people; many of whom no doubt lived through the traumatic post-war years of cultural redefinition. Enka may also appeal to those Japanese of younger generations, who, as they grow older, long for a more authentic tie to their 'Japaneseness'.

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[18] A detailed discussion of what constitutes this 'contemporary lexicon' will be provided in the following chapters. In my comparative analysis of early and contemporary enka, I will focus on an examination of the origins of enka, and how these origins evolved into their contemporary manifestations.

The traditional costumes worn by enka singers, and the values expressed in enka songs, are of course, just like the enka melodies themselves, simulacra of an old, 'authentic' Japan – a Japan that is long gone and most likely never was, yet whose premonition lingers strong in the contemporary cultural imaginary. It is the evocation of the past that lends such cultural ghosts a powerful presence, or 'present-ness'. Paradoxically, the ghost of enka is one that resists western culture, despite its very own soundscape being imbued with western elements – it is thus a transmutation of a dominant western musical discourse into a Japanese lexicon, offering the possibility of voicing, or sounding, a subaltern cultural experience. The power of enka's past-projection is that it enables a collective un-imagining of present hybrid, and disjunctive Japanese social reality by means of resurrecting an imagined past world of mythical Japanese-ness. Each time enka is performed, or listened to, an imagined Japanese past is brought into the present, and the present desire for cultural homogeneity is temporarily fulfilled by a ghostly antidote, which soothes the disjunctive cracks in the hybrid cultural imaginary – but can a national culture be cured of the traumas of colonization simply by un-imagining them?

IV. Nation as Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Enter Benjamin

Indeed, the question of social and cultural agency looms above a discussion of the cultural politics of enka like a nebulous, unanswerable question. On the one hand, the choice of a self-described Japanese person to listen to enka instead of overtly western music marks an attempt to choose that which is 'Japanese' over that which is western. On the other hand, however, this act also simultaneously marks an attempt to disregard, or un-imagine that which is western within the Japanese enka – thereby indirectly acquiescing to the presence of western elements in Japanese enka music. And yet, can this ambivalent act of un-imagining Japan's hybrid reality be equated to either a denial or an acceptance of concomitant western musical elements? After all, that which is un-imagined has never been granted the possibility of existence. Further, can we in fact proclaim that the presence of a western harmonic progression or tonal melodic structure within an enka song actually constitutes the presence of a western element, or is it something else entirely? The moment a western harmony or melody is sounded in an enka song, it becomes 'Japanese' - and in fact, arguably it becomes more 'Japanese' than most forgotten regional Japanese folk melodies.

The problem at hand is that of the spatial and temporal *porosity* of the Japanese national imaginary. Benjamin first employed the term 'porosity' in reference to his study of modern Neapolitan society, which, compared to Berlin, seemed to lack prescribed borders and clear social delineations between public and private spaces.[19] To Benjamin, who was accustomed to the clearly delineated architectural styles of northern Europe, Naples appeared to be in a state of spatial and temporal blur – it was unclear to the northern European observer whether the Neapolitan buildings were in the middle of being constructed, or in fact in the midst of decay. For Benjamin, the outside observer, Naples represented an experience of modern life free of temporal and spatial fixity. Whereas Benjamin thus used the term 'porosity' to indicate a blurring of boundaries within the parameters of a modern city, I would like to propose that in the larger world 'porosity' may be interpreted in terms of the cultural hybridity of the national imaginary. Specifically, 'porosity' indicates an *endemic* cultural hybridity that is rendered obfuscate by virtue of its very fundamentality. In a porous social fabric, temporal and spatial borders and delineations are constantly infringed upon, and as a result, are less apparent. As demonstrated in my brief analysis of Japanese history, western and traditional Japanese elements seem to weave in and out of the porous Japanese national imaginary, eluding the historical observer's gaze like flitting electrons under a microscope.

Just as an electron flits in and out of existence, blurring the borders of matter, space, and time, the porous membranes of modern societies allow for a continuous redefinition of space and time according to the ever-changing social imagination. Although Benjamin, a primarily visual theorist, conceives of spatial and temporal porosity in visual terms, observed in the blurred architectural boundaries of Naples, porosity may also be conceived of as an aural phenomenon.

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[19] "Naples," Refelctions: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings, ed. Peter Demtz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

Enka exemplifies such an instance of aural porosity – between western musical elements and Japanese traditional music, between past and present, and between individual social agents and the conjured space of the larger social imaginary, that is, the Japanese nation.

If we choose to regard the nation as a culturally porous formation then it follows that it is constantly in need of (re)creation in order to define its imaginary borders. This (re)creative act of imagining borders in the face of porosity, can be interpreted as an act of artistic production. While contemporary globalization theorists such as Arjun Appadurai maintain that the imagination is a social process, I would like to extend this claim to the domain of the artistic, or poetic imagination. Enlightenment thinker Giambattista Vico opined that the most basic stage of human knowledge and communication is poetic – that of the metaphor.[20] According to such a position, poetic associations form the building blocks of language, culture, and social imaginary. Both the initial poetic impulse, and the later act of artistic production may be considered an emotional expression of the human imagination. Poetic processes are responsible for the production of an imagined community, and whether such processes of imagining occur within a political document, an economic policy, a cry for warfare, a painting, or a popular song, they are inevitably linked to an emotional longing for the nation. First and foremost, at its most fundamental level of metonymic imagining, the nation is a *work of art* – not a static objet d'art, but a working canvas.[21]

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[20] See Vico, p.401.

[21] I would like to temper this statement by clarifying that in recognizing the nation as an aspect of artistic imaginings, I am not claiming that the nation does not have physical and political boundaries that exist as substantive realities apart from such imaginings. My claim here is that

Moreover, the nation being a modern cultural phenomenon, it is more often than not, a 'work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction'. According to Benjamin's noted essay, the defining characteristic of the mechanically reproduced art work is that it is devoid of an 'aura'. Before moving to a discussion of how the 'aura' can be applied to the artistic production of a national imaginary, I will first provide a brief interpretation of the somewhat elusive philosophical spectre that is the 'aura'. A starting point for an examination of the 'aura' may be the observation that it entails the negation of authenticity. For Benjamin, the authenticity of a work of art is dependent upon its being rooted in a historical tradition. Such a traditional, authentic, and 'auratic' work of art evokes in its viewers a sense of the art work's simultaneous 'presence and absence'. In the words of Benjamin scholar, Howard Caygill, "tradition worked by distancing its [art] objects as past in order to bring them to presence in the present"(24). According to traditional, absolutist European culture, the authenticity of a work of art was thus determined by its "ability to distance [the] viewer"(Caygill, 24). With the onset of modernity and the advent of mass reproduction, however, this paradoxical space of 'distant present-ness' occupied by the authentic work of art comes to be tampered with – the viewer is inevitably brought closer to the work of art by means of its reproduction.

The 'aura' of a work of art is thus dependent on a paradoxical presence (or, 'present-ness') evoked by means of an imagined historical distanciation from the viewing subject. The seemingly counter-intuitive logic then follows that the

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such 'realities' of nationhood are more often than not perceived through phenomenological experiences of nationhood.

reproduction's proximity, and ready availability to the viewing subject renders it incurably distanciated: its 'aura' is withered, causing "the quality of its presence [to be] depreciated" (223). In other words, the greater availability of the reproduction renders it ubiquitous, and this ubiquity closes in on the awe-inspiring distance between its past moment of creation and its present moment of observed existence. Without this imagined historical distance, the art work loses the auratic quality that defines its very artistic essence. Ironically, the omnipresence of the mechanically reproduced image thus comes to represent the negation of its authentic 'presence' as a work of art: the 'presence' of the reproduction is negated by its very ubiquity. According to Benjamin, the eliminated temporal distance between the work of art and its viewer is encompassed by the term, 'aura'. Benjamin emphatically claims: 'that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of a work of art"(223).

Thus the 'aura' comes to represent the negation of tradition, and the possibility of authentic, artistic 'presence' offered by the processes of past projection inherent within an artistic tradition. Benjamin writes:

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence...The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity (222).

Auratic art is thus unique, original, and imbued with ontological presence; and yet this very 'presence' is rendered elusive, inaccessible within a modern world inundated by mass reproductions. The elusive, yet fundamental quality of auratic art is reminiscent of the Platonic ideal form; the more immediately available, mass-produced replica may be interpreted as the deceptive shadow on the cave wall. However, this apparent Platonic dualism is complicated by two factors: first, in the age of mechanical reproduction the ideal form withers in the face of the replica; and second, the accuracy and proximity of the replica causes it to assume legitimacy akin to that of the ideal form. In the case of the withering 'aura', we thus see a veritable process of reversal between ideal and replica.

It is thus no surprise, then, that Benjamin chose to interpret the decay of the aura in negative terms, as mechanical reproduction could be seen as threatening to contaminate the ideal form of art, potentially binding humanity to the darkest depths of an inescapable cultural cave. Perhaps, however, it would be a mis-reading to interpret Benjamin's concept of the 'withering aura' in wholly negative terms. With the modern negation of the aura, Benjamin foresaw the ritual aspects of art being replaced by a concentration on its political possibilities:

> ...the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practise – politics (226).

Although his negative language with regard to the 'eliminated' aura may indicate his mourning for a lost tradition, he thus also proposes that the age of mechanical reproduction has ushered in an era in which art will be increasingly politicized. The politicization of art can be interpreted in Marxist terms, as a move to place artistic production in the hands of the people, rather than in the grips of an absolutist, elitist cultural regime.

Historians such as Steinberg, however, have interpreted the 'aura' in overtly political terms, stating that the 'aura' represents "the traditional role played by art objects in the legitimation of social formations"(95). The aura is thus not simply a quality of authentic art that is rooted in tradition and history, it refers to the processes by which certain works of art serve to create, or legitimate the traditions with which they are associated. From a historian's perspective, the aura symbiotically evolves with social formations. Thus, even though Benjamin claims that art comes to be politicized upon the decay of its 'aura', the argument can also be made that the 'aura' was always already a political tool deployed by the ruling classes to establish a legitimate artistic tradition.

In pointing out the historical argument that both auratic and reproduced art may be politicized, my intent is to show that art is inextricably linked to social process. It follows, too, then that *theories of art* are also tied to the social context in which they are conceived. What is notable in Benjamin's concept of the 'aura' as negation of tradition is that it reveals his own modern concern with a perceived sudden shift, or rupture in society marked by the emergence of capitalism, urbanization, and the onset of modern world conditions. In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin's primary concern is in isolating, and articulating a point of disjuncture, or modernist rupture that he imagines to have occurred between present mass culture and past absolutist/elitist domination of cultural media. As the title of his essay indicates, his concern is thus not only with the 'work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', but with defining the 'age of reproduction' through an analysis of artistic experience.

For Benjamin, the 'age of reproduction' is characterized by a rupture in historical time, and this rupture is apparent in the distinction between the traditional work of art and its modern, mass produced replica. The photographic postcard is held up to the original painting, and a great sense of loss, inadequacy, and deficiency is felt by the trained critic and connoisseur of 'high' art. The critic's negative response to the mass production of art is encapsulated in the withered quality of the 'aura' that Benjamin projects onto past cultural objects which he sees as occupying a lost time and place divided from contemporary mass culture. This decaying 'aura' is thus a quality not observed, but *imagined* by Benjamin. The extant works of art to which Benjamin attributes decayed, eliminated 'auras', did not experience any substantive changes as a direct result of society's modernization. No matter how many postcards of the Mona Lisa are printed, the original remains in the Louvre with her same wry, ironical smile. Further, it is also true that art works have always been replicated, even prior to the advent of mass reproduction, and in this sense, the effects of mass reproduction techniques on the societal appreciation of a work of art may have been exaggerated by Benjamin. The following critique of the 'aura' is offered by Adorno:

> Every work of art is intended for appreciation by the many, which is why the idea of reproduction is inherent in art from its very beginning. In this connection, it may be worth noting that Benjamin exaggerated considerably the difference between what he calls auratic and technological works of art, at the price of ignoring the common element in them, thus exposing his theory to dialectical critique (49).

Indeed, Adorno is correct in his observation: art is made to be disseminated. And so it is true, the 'aura' is a figment of Benjamin's imaginings; it cannot be proven to exist, just as a substantive difference cannot be identified to exist between the social functions of 'auratic' and technically reproduced art. The same can be said for the identified 'age of mechanical reproduction': rather than a disjunctive rupture in historical time, it can be seen as a continuous development from previous epochs. The modernist rupture is not real, but imagined.

However, in defence of that which is imagined, I would like to propose that while it is a valid perspective, Adorno's critique of the 'aura' as having no firm basis in reality ignores the metaphysical, and largely subjective implications of Benjamin's 'auratic' theory. In my reading, the 'aura' is Benjamin's expression of a deficiency that he perceives in the modern world of mass reproduction, and a disjuncture that he feels is dividing him from a unified, culturally homogenous past. This disjuncture between past and present is theorized in terms of a rupture between past and present worlds of art. Although he may have exaggerated the objective difference between auratic and technological art, this exaggeration is intentional: it is a means of highlighting the disjunctive fault line that he senses running through his contemporary subjective consciousness – the modernist rupture between past and future.

To what extent this fault line truly exists in the objective world is a question to be left for speculation and debate. What can be noted without question, however, is that this fracture between past and present is *imagined* by Benjamin, and furthermore, it is imagined in terms of artistic experience. The withering of the 'aura' is representative of the etiolation of the historical distance between the objet d'art and the viewing subject; also, the 'aura' can be interpreted as the etiolation of the formerly delineated borders dividing art and viewing subject. The position of the work of art within a traditional social formation is fixed according to a Gellnerian 'structure'. In modern times, such traditionally fixed borders are blurred as the social formation at large comes to be characterized by increasing porosity. According to the identified Gellnerian paradox, however, the traditional past that is evoked as 'structured', homogenous, and culturally unified, is largely imagined by the contemporary observer. This traditional past of cultural homogeneity, when art and viewer occupied fixed social-structural positions, does not refer to a specific, 'real', identifiable moment in time, rather, it is Benjamin's imagined, projected vision of the past.

In my reading of Benjamin's essay, what is of primary importance is thus not so much the idea of the 'aura', but the theorist's *use* of the 'aura' to project an imagined past onto cultural objects. In order to explicate this process of past projection, I will choose to employ the verb, to 'aurate' in the context of my following application of Benjamin's theories. In the context of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," auration is a deceptive process of past projection, for although it appears that Benjamin mourns the loss of the 'aura', he is in fact manufacturing the past existence of an 'aura' in order to articulate a present deficiency he feels in the modern world of mass reproduced art. It is notable that the act of 'auration' thus functions to simultaneously reinforce and assuage perceived cultural and historical disjunctures between past and present: the aura is negated, suggesting that it represents an inaccessible past moment; on the other hand, the aura suggests an evocation of imagined past cultural unity that serves to assuage modern anxieties. To 'aurate' can thus be regarded as an act of past projection employed in the modern era as a means of simultaneously distanciating the present as irrevocably fissured from the past, while simultaneously forging a link between the present and an imagined past moment.

The dual, contradictory processes at work within an 'auration' operate on the modern assumption that the present represents a rupture from the past. As a modern formation, the nation, too, is an entity whose present existence is perceived as emerging from a rupture with a traditional past world order. The nation must aurate itself into existence by means of artistic processes; and this dependency on such processes results in the nation itself becoming inextricable from, if not synonymous with, a work of art.

Within the Japanese national imaginary, enka song comes to be one such artistic process that aurates the nation. The negation of traditional artistic distance represented by the death of the aura is complicated when the concept of the aura is applied to music – music always exists in real time, and so one cannot say that it creates a distance between the listener and the music. Within musical experience, the listener's proximity to real time is always reinforced.[22] In my discussion of enka song, I will thus be focusing on the ways in which enka song aurates a Japanese past through aural queues and manipulations of poetic language and imagery.[23] The western musical elements of enka are resolved within an eastern context, adding a new dimension to the auration as it occurs in the colonial imaginary. It is my hope that in analyzing enka song as auration I will be able to work through the potential complications that may arise when applying visual-based theory to an aural medium. My means in overcoming this potential obstacle is to always regard music, and the act of auration as an interactive process, rather than a static, observed visual phenomenon.

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[22] See John Shepherd, *Music as Social Text*.

[23] A note should be made on recording technology and mechanical reproduction. With the advent of the phonograph, one can say that the listener comes to be detached from the place of performance. Technical reproduction thus "enables the original to meet the beholder half way, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record... the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room"(Benjamin, 223). Mechanically reproduced music thus comes to exist in a liminal locus between original performance and consumer of recording. The application of Benjamin's theory of the aura to a study of recording technology and enka would be a fascinating project. Unfortunately, such a project would require extensive archival research in Japan that is not possible for this master's thesis.

In the following chapters I will shift my focus to individual enka songs and song-texts. In my analyses of enka song, I will draw attention to the porous membranes between co-terminus yet paradoxical ontological planes and imaginaries. Further, I will attempt to show how such paradoxical incongruities are resolved by means of auration, that is, by the projection of an imagined past of cultural homogeneity and unification. The auration cannot be separated from the impossible longing that it evokes within enka - a longing for an imagined past that determines the directionality of desire. This desire follows an impracticable course towards impossible fulfillment - a negated fulfillment that constitutes the withered 'aura' itself. And yet, somehow, the very impossibility of this desire guarantees its continued vehemence, giving rise to the possibility of a national imaginary wrapped in paradox.

Chapter 2:

The Past is Born: Uncovering the Historical Roots of Enka's Imaginary

It is widely thought that the imagined Japanese 'past' evoked through enka holds particular appeal for "a public of middle-aged or elderly listeners, and finds greater favour in rural rather than urban areas"(Okada, 283). It would thus seem that the (re)assurance of traditional 'Japanese-ness' offered by enka is most sorely needed by an aging, conservative, and rural Japanese demographic. Contrary to such a popular perception, however, record industry figures reveal that roughly 20% of annual cassette sales in Japan consist of enka, indicating that "the population of enka lovers is in fact far larger than statistics suggest"(Okada, 283). Further, the pervasive presence of enka in Japan is not always quantifiable by record sales. Enka is a staple in karaoke bars, and is featured in various television programs such as the annual *Kōhaku Uta Gassen*, a music variety show that is central to Japanese popular culture. Thus, although enka may not outsell the more western-sounding J-pop music, Japan is nonetheless pervaded by sounds of enka. The association of enka with an elderly, rural audience is thus perhaps partially a reflection of the Japanese public's tendency to link enka with a 'past' Japan, or a 'Japan of old'. It may be said that in today's Japan, enka has thus come to symbolize 'the past' in the broadest sense of the term. In the context of contemporary enka, the evocation of a 'past' Japan is tied to the genre's preserved, traditional subject matter and formulaic musical and poetic structures. Indeed, enka scholar Nakamura Toyō describes contemporary enka as "the most conservative strain in [Japanese] popular music"(272). Enka's 'past' imaginary is thus realized within a highly conservative genre, and this imagined 'past-ness' is strengthened by virtue of the genre's association with an elderly, rural listening audience.

As I have argued in the first chapter of this thesis, however, it is my position that the Japanese national 'past' evoked through enka is a present construction aurated into existence through musico-poetic media. In order for such an auration to be possible, it is first necessary for there to be a perceived disjunctive fissure between past and present within the parameters of enka's Japanese cultural imaginary. Within enka song, the fissure between past and present can be interpreted as running along the various fault lines of Japan's conflicted modern identity. The perceived rupture between past and present is irrevocably linked to the imagined divides between east and west, traditional and modern, *furusato* (rural homeland) and city, old and young, transience and stability, poor and rich, etc. This list of binaries represents the extreme polarities of modern Japanese social experience; such binary polarities are not so much a reflection of real lived experience (reality is always a blurred continuum) but can be useful in identifying the directionality of auration. Namely, if auration arises as a result of a desire for 'the past' this desire can be expressed as the yearning for one's *furusato*, for an old lover, a deceased relative, or an item of past material culture evincing sentimental value. In essence, to aurate is to symbolically cross or blur the imagined divide between present and past, and, in the case of enka, this ontological transgression is made possible by means of the musico-poetic imagination.

Enka, however, was not always the music that opened the symbolic gateway to Japan's collective imagined 'past': at the time of its initial crystallization as a genre, enka was very much the music of Japan's *present*. In fact, early enka was a revolutionary genre of music devoted to the expression of newly arrived, western democratic ideals redefined according to a Japanese cultural context. In order to understand the progression by which enka transformed from a highly political, revolutionary musical genre to an apolitical, conservative genre involved in the projection of a traditional Japanese 'past', I would like to provide a brief overview of some key issues surrounding the history of enka. Following this brief historical discussion I will move to an analysis of selected enka songs from the Taishō (1912 – 1926) and early Shōwa (1926 – 1988) eras, in an attempt to isolate the poetic moments marking enka's gradual envelopment within a preserved, conservative cocoon of an imagined Japanese 'past'. From this cocoon is born the troubled, imagined fault line between present and past Japan - - tracing this imagined temporal rupture, I hope to uncover the birth of the 'past' within the enka imaginary.[1]

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[1] Due to a lack of available recordings of early enka, my analyses in this section will be primarily restricted to song-texts. While I did manage to locate simple, reduced piano scores of these enka melodies, it is difficult to provide an informed musical analysis of such enka without access to recordings. Therefore, I have chosen to restrict my analysis to the poetry of the lyrics in this chapter, along with some general commentary on the melodic and harmonic structures as best as I can discern form the scores available. In my discussion of contemporary enka, I will include a fuller analysis which considers both the music and the song-texts. Within this last chapter, I will also provide a brief discussion of the musical characteristics of contemporary enka.

How Enka got its 'En': Examining Enka's History

If one were to suggest to the average Japanese enka fan that the roots of their beloved, conservative genre of music lie in *enzetsu*, a form of Meiji-era radical urban political chant, they would no doubt react to this assertion as though you were attempting to initiate a zany, if not entirely absurd comedic exchange. And yet, according to all historical sources, this seldom recognized fact is true: enka originated in the revolutionary *enzetsu* chants of Tokyo and Ōsaka during the Meiji era (1868 – 1912). Over the course of the Taishō period (1912 – 1926), however, this radical political chant of the urban under classes was somehow transmuted into a popular, though characteristically lugubrious, romantic ballad form. Japanese sociologist and musicologist, Mita Munesuke writes:

> From 1910 onward, there are no more songs containing tears which relate directly to politics, either actively or passively evoked. Instead, beginning with several of the most popular songs of 1909 and 1910, and continuing throughout the Taishō and Shōwa periods up to the 1960's, the tears which are sung of almost always flow in connection with a love between a man and a woman in the private sphere (Mita, 33).

With the onset of the Taishō era, we thus see Japanese popular song[2] shifting its focus from the political issues affecting Japanese public life, to more personal, sentimental subject matter.

In stark contrast to such sentimental ballads, the majority of *enzetsu* chant was virulent, bombastic, and offered harsh criticisms of Meiji and early Taishō politics and society. *Enzestu* chant was employed as a means of disseminating knowledge of western democratic and liberal values amongst the Japanese working classes. Due to widespread illiteracy, street chanting was often the only means by which political revolutionaries could enlist support for the newly emergent *Jiyū Minken Undō* (People's Rights Movement). The primary function of *enzestu* was to instill a social consciousness within the Japanese public, and so, needless to say, the lyrics were considered of greater importance than was the melody; *enzetsu* were thus usually half-shouted and half-chanted to emphasize the texts clearly (Fujie, "Popular Music to 1945").[3] Musicologist Mitsui Tōru likens the street performance of *enzestu* to 'guerilla warfare', owing to the fact that *enzetsu* performers were often 'on-the-run', pursued by the oppressive government forces of the day (64). *Enzetsu* thus constituted a highly controversial, if not threateningly iconoclastic presence within the rigid, absolutist political climate of Meiji Japan. A popular enka of the late Meiji era, "Dainamaito-don", roughly translated, states: "Government for the people, by the people, if you don't grant us this, then we will set off the dynamite – bang!" With such inflammatory lyrics, one can see why *enzestu* chanters would flee like 'guerillas into the mist' upon the arrival of the draconian Meiji censorship police.

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[2] Mita's study includes all Japanese *ryūkōka* (popular) songs of the Taishō and Shōwa eras. Mita uses the term '*ryūkōka*', however, to indicate mainly enka songs. There were other (somewhat less) popular genres in the Taishō era that are not included in Mita's study, such as *naniwa-bushi* (traditional tea-house music accompanied by shamisen), *shōka* (children's songs, modeled after western folk tunes), *shinminyō* (new folk songs inspired by western Volkslied), amongst others. For the purposes of this thesis, I will restrict my observations regarding 'Japanese popular music' to enka music, which was by all accounts the most widely popular emergent genre of the Taishō and early Shōwa eras.

However, it was not long before such bombastic chants transformed into a more complex musical form influenced by the theatre and tea-house music of the day. Owing to the increased musico-poetic possibilities afforded by a more intricate musical form, the lyrics of *enzetsu* began to grow in poetic complexity - - the bombastic political chants came to be replaced by lyrics incorporating more subtle, ironic social critique. The increased musical complexity of *enzetsu* was aided by the incorporation of instrumental accompaniment to the once predominantly *a capella* chant. Throughout the Meiji era, *enzetsu* chant was occasionally accompanied by *shamisen*, but after 1907, newly introduced western instruments, such as the violin and the accordion, came to be integral parts of *enzetsu* performance.[4]

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[3] The Peoples Rights Movement began in 1874, shortly after the Meiji Restoration, when the influx of western literature resulted in the majority of Japanese people gaining exposure to the ideas of the French Revolution, and the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill. The democratic ideals of the French Revolution caught hold of the Japanese public, and aroused opposition against the absolute rule of the newly restored Meiji Emperor (Mitsui, 62).

Upon the transformation of *enzetsu* street chant into an accompanied, musico-poetically complex genre, the word 'enka' ('passionate/colourful song'), a derivative of *enzetsu* (meaning 'passionate/colourful script') came to be employed in association with the new, popular song form. The term '*enzetsu*' was then reserved for the *yomi-uri*, or street news-readers, who continued to inform the largely illiterate public of current events and politics. According to enka historian, Soeda Tomomichi, son of legendary *enka-shi*, Soeda Azembō, the preference for the term 'enka' was partially the result of a campaign by the newly formed enka performer's union (*enka-shi kumiai*), that sought to distinguish the artistic *enka-shi* from the more functional *yomi-uri* (newsreader). After the formation of the enka performer's union (*enka-shi kumiai*) in 1918, *enka-shi* devoted their talents to the performance of popular songs and the sale of sheet music, whereas *yomi-uri* continued to recite the news (Soeda, 177 – 178). Of course, it is hard to say how strictly the occupational boundaries between *enka-shi* and *yomi-uri* were ever regulated. Nonetheless, with the rise of recording technology and radio in the early Shōwa period, both the *enka-shi* and the *yomi-uri* were soon rendered obsolete (Soeda, 4).

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[4] Kaminaga Ryōgetsu is credited as being the first to provide violin accompaniment to enka. His 1907 recording is typically used as the date marking the moment when *enzetsu* came to be accompanied by western instruments (Mitsui, 65).

The late Taishō era (1912 – 1926) marked the emergence of the Japanese recording industry, and nation-wide radio broadcasting. The start of the Japanese recording industry is dated at 1907, with the establishment of a national record company that would later assume the name of Nippon Columbia (Nakamura, 265). Phonograph technology soon became available to a larger segment of the population during this period, and by 1927 three major record companies were established: Nippon Victor, Nippon Columbia, and Nippon Polydor. Radio began broadcasting in 1925 within the major cities of Tokyo, Nagoya and Ōsaka. Yano notes that "the Japanese government [soon] recognized the importance of electronic media such as radio and placed it under tight controls… By 1941, Japan had the fourth highest number of radio receivers in the world, with more than 45 percent of all households owning a radio"(1998: 250). The emergent recording industry was aided by the population's increased access to radio, and also by the completion of a national rail system that allowed musicians to easily travel throughout the nation (Hughes:1999, 36). Yano thus rightly observes that in Taishō and early Shōwa Japan, "mass media worked toward creating a nation of listeners, connected and defined through song"(Yano,1998: 249).

Within such a modern Japanese nation united by mass media, the peripatetic street-singer and news-reader was gradually outmoded. The *enka-shi*, or street-singers, however, did not disappear overnight. In fact, early enka such as

"*Kachūysha no uta*" ("Katyūsha's Song")(1914), owed much of their success to *enka-shi*, who performed such new songs in the streets and sold sheet music. It was not until "*Kachusha no uta*" was widely popularized by *enka-shi* that it was recorded as a phonograph record. Upon being distributed as a record, this song promptly sold over 200, 000 copies, marking a major landmark in the establishment of the Japanese record industry. "*Kimi koishi*"("You Whom I Long For")(1931), was the first enka song that managed to gain commercial success without first being disseminated by *enka-shi*. The success of "*Kimi koishi*" thus marked the beginning of popular songs commissioned by big business. Nonetheless, *enka-shi* continued to eek out a modest living performing in bars and tea houses throughout the early Shōwa era, until the advent of *karaoke* rendered them obsolete even within the 'floating-world' of Japan's night life.

Along with the growth of the Japanese record industry, and the gradual demise of the street-singer, enka song came to be solidified as a marketable, formulaic genre, shaped by newly defined patterns of expression. A major identifying feature of the newly emergent 'enka formula', was its sentimental, even maudlin subject matter.[5] In particular, this new, plaintive song form was devoted to the expression of desolation as felt by Taishō urban migrants. The Taishō era was marked by large-scale urban migration, and social fragmentation. Christine Yano observes that "modern Taishō life was characterized by a reformulation of… urban culture, based in part upon [the] keen sense of displacement [experienced by the] new urbanites"(247). Ethnomusicologist David Hughes writes that enka came to be the songs of those struggling to "adapt to modern city life; [enka songs thus] speak of love, drink, loneliness, homesickness… often with resignation….Enka texts cater to self-pity, or at least self-absorption."(Hughes:1990, 11). According to such scholars, the sentimental thematics of Taishō era popular enka song is a reflection of a kind of Taishō 'popular consciousness', encapsulated in the lonely urbanite, apathetic towards issues of the larger world, drowning his/her sorrows in drink and self-pity.

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[5] During the Taishō era, the *kanji* (idiographic character) for the 'en' of enka was altered. It has been erroneously asserted that this change in the *kanji* indicating 'en' in enka was put into practice as a result of the increasingly romantic subject matter of Taishō enka song. In her work, *Tears of Longing*, enka scholar, Christine Yano, has misinterpreted the meanings of the old and new *kanji* characters of enka, (艶歌) and (演歌), stating that with the shift to contemporary enka, "the 'en' of speech changed to the 'en' of romance."(Yano:2002, 34). While this interpretation would *seem* to be correct, the opposite is in fact the case – during the Taishō era, despite enka's subject matter growing increasingly maudlin, the *kanji* for 'en' changed from that of passion, and lust, (艶) to the kanji indicating the act of 'spreading/disseminating through a performative act' (演). With the rise of the Taishō era recording industry, the 'passionate/colourful song', enka (艶歌) thus became the 'widely performed/disseminated song', enka (演歌) that it is today. The change in enka's idiographic characters therefore must not be misinterpreted as relating to a change in enka's subject matter, when in fact this change reflects a change in enka's *popularity*, and increased mass dissemination.

The newfound sentimentality of Taishō enka song was indeed a radical departure from the overtly political chants and songs of the late Meiji street-singers. One may wonder, however, why it was that such destitute and disgruntled urbanites would forego the political, revolutionary zeal of *enzetsu* in favour of the essentially apolitical, sentimental Taishō enka. The shift of enka's subject matter from the more objective, political chants, to romantic, subjective songs of 'self-pity', could perhaps be interpreted as a reflection of the changing social and economic climate of the Taishō era. Namely, after the granting of the Constitution in 1889, wide-spread disillusionment gripped the nation – the Japanese people's quality of life scarcely improved, despite this so-called victory for democratic rights. This general disillusionment with the token *Taishō demokurashii* (democracy) was compounded by the economic instability of this era. While Japan's military victories in China (1895) and Russia (1905) excited the people, these costly foreign escapades left Japan in economic turmoil. Although Japan had succeeded in establishing itself as an international military power, the reality remained that city streets were crowded with injured veterans begging for food, and very few Japanese could even afford a bowl of rice (Soeda, 169 - 70). This grim social reality was tempered by the promise of bettering one's lot by moving to the fashionable, westernized, modern city, which was in full swing during the Roaring Twenties. A general feeling of social and political disillusionment thus existed alongside the glimmer of hope for 'better times' afforded by the bright lights of the modern city-scape. Both disillusionment and hope thus find expression in the enka of the Taishō period, though admittedly the negative songs far outweigh the positive.

The extent to which popular songs may be interpreted as a reflection of a 'popular consciousness', however, presents a problematic conundrum for the scholar of popular music. Musicologist Mita Munesuke points out that while popular songs may serve to hold up a kind of mirror to the population in question, such a 'mirror' "does not provide a faithful, planar reflection of popular feelings. [It may] contain many peculiar refractions and chromatic dispositions, for [it is] as stylized, as glorified, as materialized and as hyperbolized as everyday experience"(Mita, 8). Mita thus chooses to regard popular enka as a kind of highly stylized reflection of popular consciousness, which is defined according to sets of prescribed *kata* (patterned forms) of composition and expression.[6]

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[6] The distinction between the Japanese conception of *kata* (patterned form) and the western notion of 'form' is significant. I will elaborate on *kata* and enka in the final chapter of this thesis in my

Aside from the concern that popular songs may only provide a trite, patterned reflection of popular experience, there is also the question as to *whom* is manufacturing and disseminating such patterned clichés of everyday life. In her article on Taishō and early Shōwa enka entitled, "Defining the Modern Nation in Popular Song 1914 – 1932," Christine Yano frames her observations regarding early enka under the assumption that the "production [of enka songs] was not the spontaneous outpouring of peoples' sentiments, but the calculated outcome of market strategies based upon economic gain… [Presented with such musical products, consumers made] active choices to sing or listen for individual purposes"(247). The role of the newly emergent recording industry must therefore be recognized in the redefinition of enka according to more subjective, less political, sentimental thematics. In the case of Taishō and early Shōwa Japan, it is also important to recognize the pervasive government censorship over radio and the recording industry. Synthesizing Yano and Mita's theoretical perspectives, it may be said that enka is a popular song form whose highly stylized affective *kata* have been shaped and perpetuated by both the recording industry, the Japanese government, and by the consumers, who each represent important roles within a dynamic cultural and economic interface.

The emergent *kata* of the newly marketable Taishō enka song extended beyond a formulaic set of sentimental thematics: Taishō enka marked the beginning of a new, codified, hybrid musical sound. The 1914 hit, "*Kachyūsha no uta*", is

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appraisal of Yano's analysis of contemporary enka according to *kata*. Since *kata* seem to be more firmly established and entrenched in the contemporary enka world than they were in the Taishō era, it is my decision to include a detailed discussion of *kata* as part of the chapter on contemporary enka.

often considered to be the first 'modern' enka song, as it sounded the new, hybrid musical elements that would later become the staples of enka music. Whereas most popular music in Japan of the early Taishō era resembled traditional *kouta* (shamisen-accompanied, Edo-era tea-house songs), "*Kachyūsha no uta*" employed western harmonizations and a relatively triadic melodic structure mixed with a smattering of Japanese traditional, pentatonic scales. "*Kachyūsha no uta*" was the debut piece of Nakayama Shinpei (1887 – 1952), Japan's foremost composer of popular songs. His prolific career began at the newly founded Tokyo School of Music, where he was one of the first Japanese to receive a formal western musical education. It is thus no surprise that many of his songs, such as "*Kachyūsha no uta*" reflect western triadic thinking. According to musicologist, David Hughes:

> Some *kayōkyoku* were indistinguishable melodically from Western songs, but the subset known as *nihon-chō kayōkyoku* ('Japanese mode popular songs) or enka, used versions of the *yō* and *in* scales. The predominant choices, however, were *yō* on 1 and *in* on 6. These melodies are extremely rare in traditional song, but they have the advantage of resembling gapped versions of the western major and minor modes respectively; thus scholars often call them 'pentatonic major' and 'pentatonic minor'. These two modes still dominate the enka genre. An important advantage of melodies in these two modes is that they can be harmonized as if they were normal western major and minor tunes (Hughes:1990, 19).

What can be gleaned from this quote is that enka composers attempted to fit traditional Japanese musical elements (the *yō* and *in* scales) into a western musical context. Due to the fact that the traditional pentatonic scales that were selected for use in such hybrid popular compositions were redefined according to a western harmonic ear, the use of such scales has come to be referred to as 'neo-traditionalism'. Such use of *yō* and *in* scales, along with neo-traditional vocal ornamentation and vibrato, help enka serve as "a bridge between past and present, city and country"(Hughes:1999, 42).

Through an examination of enka's early history, we thus see the transformation of enka into a musically hybrid, or 'neo-traditional', patterned popular form. Enka's musical and poetic evolution was influenced by changes in the Japanese socio-political climate due to the large-scale urbanization of the Taishō era, and also by the rise of state-regulated modes of mass communication and musical dissemination. These two factors, propelled by the rapid growth of the recording industry in the late 1920's contributed to the crystallization of enka as a widely popular, sentimental, and formulaic form of romantic popular song.

Beginning with what is popularly considered to be the first bona-fide enka song: "*Kachyūsha no uta*"("Katyūsha's Song")(1914), I will now move to an in-depth analysis of representative enka songs of the Taishō and early Shōwa eras. In my analyses I will focus on the development of enka as a genre that serves to lament 'the past'. While early Taishō enka tends to conceive of this lament as a social comment on the dehumanizing aspects of rapid modernization and the suffering of marginalized peoples within modern Japan, by the early Shōwa period enka's lament comes to be expressed as a deeply personal lament for lost love, a subjective sentimental emotion that is not directly rooted in a particular social reality, but somehow transcends social reality. These analyses of early enka are intended to 'set the stage' for the discussion of contemporary enka in the third chapter of this thesis. In contemporary enka, we see that the sentimental longing of early Shōwa enka comes to be expressed in a codified style that continuously references the Japanese nation – both in terms of its physical geography and musico-poetic traditions. Though enka thus emerges as a highly sentimental genre in the Shōwa era, this seemingly personal/subjective sentimentality eventually evolves into a sentimentality that is generalized in nationalistic terms – and comes to be a perennial feature of the modern Japanese cultural imaginary.

"Katyūsha's Song" ("*Kachyūsha no uta*") (1914)

"Katyūsha's Song", was featured in director and famed 'New Theater' playwright, Shimamura Hōgetsu's theatrical adaptation of Tolstoy's last novel, *Resurrection*. Shimamura commissioned his friend, Tokyo College of Music graduate, Nakayama Shinpei, to compose a song for *Resurrection*[7] that would ensure the play's success. While western-educated Japanese popular music composers of the day were typically called upon to produce songs that identically imitated western music, Shimamura Hōgetsu requested that Nakayama Shinpei compose a melody "somewhere between Japanese folk music and that of the European song-lieder type"(Nakamura, 264). The resultant "Katyūsha's Song" has come to be known as one of the first popular songs to synthesize Japanese and western musical elements.

Examining the accompanying score, we can see that the melodic line indeed displays syncretism between Japanese pentatonicism and western tonality: the majority of the melodic notes constitute both the F pentatonic major scale, as well as the tonal F major scale.[8] The presence of the pentatonic scale in "Katyūsha's

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[7] Original title, *Voskresenie* (1899). In Japanese, the title is *Fukkatsu*.

[8] The only note that cannot be linked to either a pentatonic or tonal F major scale is the raised 5 pitch in bar 10. This raised 5 seems to adds a western, jazzy feel to the melodic line.

Song" is, however, not as prominent when compared to the enka songs that followed, owing to the fact that the tonal focus of the melody seems to emphasize an underlying western triadic structure. Pentatonicism is most noticeable in the Japanese folk style vocal melismas (consisting of neighbouring tones) on the high C, in bars 6-7, and 14 – 15; and the melisma in bar 12 on F. Aside from these Japanese folk-style melodic melismas, all in all, a brief glance at the score shows that "Katyūsha's Song" is for the most part a western triadic, tonal melody, framed within a strophic song form.

Given that the melody of "Katyūsha's Song" is predominantly tonal, it is not surprising that accompanying harmonizations follow standard western tonic-subdominant-dominant (I – IV – V – I) chord progressions. However, it is possible that, depending on performance practice, a more pentatonic feeling could be evoked from such seemingly western harmonizations. For example, if the performers chose to provide accompaniment by a *shamisen*, for instance, "Katyūsha's Song" would soon be transmuted into a Japanese folk-type melody - - even if a *shamisen* were to sound I – IV – V – I harmonizations, the non-western tuning of the instrument would alter the western harmonies to a more traditional Japanese sound. Thus, the relative 'Japaneseness' or 'western-ness' of "Katyūsha's Song" may vary according to performance practice.

An examination of the music thus reveals two co-existing, overlapping aural planes within "Katyūsha's Song": pentatonic and tonal, or, more broadly, Japanese and western. The musical syncretism displayed in this song gives rise to a liminal musical space, where the delineations between Japanese and western music are blurred. This liminal space also envelops the lyrics of "Katyūsha's Song," as the blended Japanese and western cultural signifiers function to redefine the over-arching context of Tolstoy's original Russian narrative. Within the context of Shimamura Hōgetsu's adaptation of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, "Katyūsha's Song" evokes the sorrowful parting of Nekhlyudov from his lover, the servant girl, Katyūsha (or, 'Kachyūsha', in Japanese). In particular, "Katyūsha's Song" captures the moment when Nekhlyudov must part with Katyūsha' as she is to be sent off to exile in Siberia. The subsequent narrative of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* centers on the moral rehabilitation of Nekhlyudov, a reckless upper-class young man, whose journey to moral and spiritual rectitude follows his realization that in seducing the servant girl, Katusha, he indirectly brought about her ruin and eventual imprisonment. During her exile in Siberia, Katusha, too, learns to overcome her past as a degenerate woman forced into prostitution, and to choose a more morally upright life. "Katyūsha's Song" marks the dramatic parting of Nekhlyudov and Katusha, but more importantly, this song signals the beginning of the lovers' respective solitary journeys towards spiritual self-discovery.

The seemingly maudlin sentimentality of "Katyūsha's Song" is thus given a weightier dimension due to the underlying presence of Tolstoy's moral didacticism. The repeated phrase, 'O, the hardness of parting'(*wakare no tsurasa*) may be interpreted as both a comment on the sorrow of parting with one's lover, but also as a comment upon the hardness of the struggle to let go of romantic love in order to attain a heightened sense of spiritual awareness. Given Tolstoy's socialist political consciousness, and the radical western ideals that were in circulation amidst

Shimamura Hōgetsu's Taishō theatrical circles, the spiritual journey embarked upon by Nekhlyudov and Katyūsha can also be interpreted in more Marxist terms, as the awakening of the human spirit in the face of a dehumanizing, classist society.

Whether one chooses to interpret "Katyūsha's Song" according to Marxist rhetoric, or more generally in Christian moral didactic terms, it is worthy to note that within the context of this culturally hybrid piece, such western philosophical teachings are transmuted and reworked in a uniquely Japanese poetic medium. In traditional Japanese poetry, such as *haiku*, it is common for imagery of the natural world, and particularly seasonal imagery, to be employed as a means of encapsulating a particular emotional state or an experience of heightened spiritual awareness. Within "Katyūsha's Song," each verse emphasizes the cold, winter landscape; and such poetic evocations of the snowy winter fields are juxtaposed against the repeated phrase, 'Katyūsha dear one/ O! the hardness of parting'. The effect of this juxtaposition is that the emotional state of Nehklyudov is expressed through seemingly objective, imagistic descriptions of the natural world. Lines such as 'The snow that falls from twilight into the night/ Will coat the road – la la – running through the fields and mountains' and 'The wind will blow through the fields – la la – the sun will set', function to evoke Tolstoy's Russian landscape, but also to link this landscape with Nehklyudov's inner feelings. The poetic link that is forged between the barren winter landscape and Nehklyudov's moral and spiritual desolation, can thus be interpreted as a traditional Japanese poetic formula employed within a reworking of Tolstoy's Russian text.

Given that "Katyūsha's Song" marks a reworking of Tolstoy's narrative in Japanese poetic terms, it follows that, within this song, Tolstoy's original, western conception of the 'spiritual journey' is also opened up to a Japanese reinterpretation. Namely, the conjured image of Nehklyudov wandering through the snowy 'wide fields' in search of spiritual enlightenment is reminiscent of the itinerant monk, or the traveling poet, in the Japanese literary tradition. In this Buddhistic interpretation, Nehklyudov may be conceived of as an ascetic, Buddhist recluse, who traverses the natural world in search of oneness with the spiritual realm. Coupled with this Buddhistic conception of Nekhlyudov as a wandering monk, is the evocation of Shintōistic practices of nature worship, suggested by the 'prayer to the gods', or *kami*, that is offered in the first verse. A characteristically Japanese sense of religious syncretism, between Buddhistic notions of enlightenment and Shintōistic nature worship, can thus be read in Nehklyudov's spiritual quest through the harsh natural landscape.

The central theme of the spiritual journey is complemented by a related theme, that of 'the passage of time'; and this secondary theme can also be interpreted in either western or Japanese religious/poetic terms. The use of seasonal imagery can often be associated with a heightened awareness of the inevitable passage of time. In the case of "Katyūsha's Song," whereas the season of winter is evoked as a harsh, present reality, this reality is tempered by the hope of the coming spring. Lines such as 'before the thin snow melts' and 'the wind will blow through the fields/ the sun will set', suggest Nehklyudov's awareness that while nature may be unforgiving, it is also predictable, governed by unchanging cycles. In a western religious context, Nehklyudov's resignation to the passing of time can be interpreted as his acquiescence to a higher power that he hopes will one day uncover his snow-covered road to salvation. Or, alternatively, if one were to draw upon Tolstoy's Christian-Socialist perspective, one may interpret Nehklyudov's heightened perception of time as that of a man who believes he is marching along an inevitable, teleological course towards spiritual and social enlightenment – a spiritual enlightenment that is envisioned in terms of man restoring a connection to the uncorrupted, egalitarian forces of his natural environment. In a syncretic, Shintō-Buddhistic interpretation, however, one may consider Nehklyudov's decision to wander the 'wide fields' as his attempt to attain oneness with the natural world, through embracing the harsh emptiness of his surroundings. In accepting the emptiness within and without, the lonely traveler is able to thrust himself into the endless flux of time, and to attain freedom from the emotional trappings of his former life.

Just as the syncretism of the melodic line allows "Katyūsha's Song" to sound both a western and Japanese aural context, the lyrics of this song can be interpreted as expressing many layers of cultural meaning. While the theme of 'the passage of time' may be interpreted according to both western and Japanese contexts, in the context of this thesis, it is it is crucial to note that in neither of these possible interpretations is the passage of time conceived of as consisting of disjunctive ruptures between alternate temporal/ontological planes. Rather, within the lyrics of "Katyūsha's Song," past, present and future are seen as parts of the greater natural world, in which all things are united in a holistic landscape. The emphasis in the lyrics of "Katyūsha's Song" is placed on an awareness of the cyclical nature of the natural world, and the ephemerality of human existence in the face of a greater spiritual reality. The imagery hinting at the coming spring denotes a hope for a more enlightened future, and this future is linked to present suffering by means of the symbolic snow-covered road that Nehklyudov must follow on his spiritual journey. The primary concern in this song is thus with the struggles of the present, including the struggle to reach a better future. Although this song is one of parting, the past is not lamented – the parting of the lovers is sorrowful, yet it ultimately marks the beginning of a brighter future. The central themes of lost love and the passage of time, however, are both taken up in later enka, and codified into a patterned sense of longing for the past. In "Katyūsha's Song," we thus see that the 'past' has yet to be born – it is in the making.

"The Boatman's Ditty" ("*Sendō kouta*") (1921)

While the breakthrough success of "Katyūsha's Song" established Nakayama Shinpei as the foremost composer of Japanese popular songs, his 1921 hit, "The Boatman's Ditty" consolidated the musical style that was to define enka in the late Taishō and Shōwa periods. According to enka musicologist Nagata Gyōji, "The Boatman's Ditty" provided a musical pattern that was to be emulated by other popular enka songs of the era (93). The key identifying features of this enka pattern, or form, as laid out in "The Boatman's Ditty" is the use of the *yonanuki*, or revised pentatonic scale.[9]

The *yonanuki* scale, directly translated, means the 'removal of the fourth and seventh', and as its name indicates, this scale can be described as a western major or minor scale without the fourth and seventh degrees. The *yonanuki* scale was employed as a means of synthesizing Japanese traditional pentatonic scales into a western harmonic framework. Since this scale came to be so deftly employed in Nakayama's compositions, it was soon taken up by other enka composers that followed.

As a point of comparison, in "Katyūsha's Song," we see Nakayama's use of primarily *yonanuki* scale degrees (except for the aberrant raised fifth in bar 11), but the effect of the *yonanuki* is muted by the overt triadic thinking that is sounded in the composition. In "The Boatman's Ditty," however, we hear the melodic line ascend and descend a pentatonic scale, and the western triad is less audible. The pentatonicism, however, is conceived in terms of a western, tonic-dominant strophic song structure, and so the pentatonic scale assumes the guise of a *yonanuki* scale - not a Japanese traditional scale, but a revised western scale. This seemingly subtle distinction between a traditional Japanese pentatonic scale and the *yonanuki* scale is a poignant one. Namely, due to the fact that traditional Japanese tunings did not conform to western standardized tunings, a traditional Japanese scale played on a traditional Japanese instrument would sound quite different from a pentatonic scale sounded on a western instrument, tuned to a western ear. The *yonanuki* scale thus marks an attempt to synthesize traditional Japanese musical practice with a newly arrived western musical tuning system.

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[9] Another feature of this piece that was heavily emulated by later enka was the A A' B A' pattern followed by each verse. Prior to arriving at the first verse, the piece opens with two instrumental phrases, one in the dominant, the second, contrasting phrase in the tonic minor key, punctuated by a rhythmic V7 – i cadence characteristic of enka. The singer then enters in the tonic minor key. Two paired (call-response) phrases follow in the tonic (the first phrase ending in a half cadence in the dominant, the second phrase ending in a full cadence in the tonic), followed by a restatement of the opening phrase in the dominant. The concluding melodic phrase marks a return to the tonic, a recapitulation of the second, tonic 'response' phrase of the opening call-response phrases. This musical structure still pervades much of today's enka.

Turning to the lyrical content of this song, we find, unlike the ambiguous, re-interpreted Russian landscape of "Katyūsha's Song," that characteristically Japanese scenery is evoked in "The Boatman's Ditty." In particular, the 'Japan' that is evoked through this song is a modern vision of 'Japan' as seen and experienced by the displaced, dispossessed, and marginal figure of the 'boatman'. Such boatmen would have been commonplace during the industrialization of Japan, when workers would have needed transport to and from factories prior to the establishment of an adequate system of bridges and railroads.

The boat that figures in this song is an old-fashioned, wooden Japanese-style vessel, which would have been manually oared by the boatman. This traditional Japanese vessel is set into relief against a modern backdrop of industrialization and poverty. The boat may thus be interpreted as a symbol of an 'Old Japan'; this relic of a Japanese past is depicted as a free-floating, precarious, uncertain entity, bobbing along the endless 'flow of water,' tempting the fluid boundaries of life and death, existence and oblivion. The boat is therefore also a symbol of transience, a commonly recurring subject in enka song. In contemporary enka, however, transience is typically conceived of in terms of the lonely urbanite, who has strayed far from his/her rural *furusato*. At the time when "The Boatman's Ditty" was composed, however, this dichotomy between city and *furusato* had yet to be codified within the enka imaginary. As a result, the transient existence of the boat is not conceived of in relation to the two opposing, imagined locations of city and *furusato*; rather, the precarious boat teeters along the endless 'flow of water' – it appears to have no originating point, nor any point of immanent arrival.

Despite its futile, free-floating transience, the boat is propelled forward by the tenacious labour of the boatman. From a Marxist perspective, the boat may thus be interpreted as symbolic of the Sisyphusian labours of the working classes within an industrial society. From a less Marxist, and more Buddhistic perspective, one may interpret the boat as representing the human soul desperately trying to keep afloat upon the relentless flux of a 'greater reality'. Alternatively, the boat could be seen as a synechdochal representation of the struggles of the Japanese nation itself, as it ventures upon the uncertain course of rapid westernization.

The 'flow of water' may thus be the flow of history, propelling Japan along an uncertain course towards modernity. The boat is framed by the two contrasting images of the withered eulalia (*susuki*) grass and the moon; these two images frame the melodramatic narrative of the boatman and his wife unfolding upon the uncertain waters of the Tone River. Both the *susuki* grass and the moon are seasonal poetic images connoting autumn in Japanese traditional poetry. In September, moon-gazing is a popular activity in Japan, as the autumn moon is thought to be the most beautiful of all the months of the year. During such moon-gazing festivities, the autumn *susuki* (pampas) grass is displayed along with round rice cakes which are thought to resemble the lunar orb; the *susuki* grass is considered a symbol of autumnal beauty, its deep, brownish green hue setting into relief the platinum moon. Within the first verse of "The Boatman's Ditty," however, the *susuki* are repeatedly described as 'withered' and it is stressed that they are 'never to flower'. The traditional Japanese poetic image of autumnal beauty is thus transmuted into a withered image of decay, degeneration, and impotence. The autumn that these grasses beckon is not one of beauty, but rather they point to an autumn that precedes the imminent approach of desiccation and death. The 'cold wind' of the last verse seems to indicate the onset of an inevitable, bleak, final winter for the boatman and his wife. What shines on as a beacon of hope, however, above this desperate couple is the image of the autumn moon. The moon is portrayed as a benevolent, though distant guiding light: it provides no warmth to ease the 'hot tears' of the couple. The moon serves not to provide comfort, but merely to propel the course of the cold water, which in turn thrusts the two boat people along the course of their marginal lives. The images of the moon and the *susuki* thus evoke a sense of an old, traditional, and once beautiful Japan that is now distant and lifeless, withered, and desecrated.

Given his desperate circumstances, the boatman's carefree levity in the statement, 'life is like the flow of water after all/ so let's you and me be boat people', is soon shown to be empty bravado: the sad reality of the couple is revealed in the 'hot tears that fall' in the last stanza. The Boatman's seemingly jovial attitude is but a failed attempt at finding a sense of freedom at the utter margins of society. After all, what appears to be a carefree, whimsical decision, to 'live as a boatman on the Tone River', is actually a pre-determined fate that cannot be averted - and the Boatman's resignation to his sad fate can be noted in his solemn restatement of the line: 'I am going to live as a boatman on the Tone River'.

Although "The Boatman's Ditty" may be interpreted as a song capturing the social ills of industrialization and the suffering of the under classes in modern Japan, it is also a love song that is sung by the boatman to his new wife. Given the hardships faced by such marginal workers of the day, it is likely that the woman would have had to work as a 'boatman' alongside her partner, and so traditional romantic tropes of 'the passive, waiting woman' would not apply to such a romance. Although "Katyūsha's Song" recounts a melodramatic parting of two star-crossed lovers, no such sentimentality is conveyed in "The Boatman's Ditty." This marginalized couple will not be forced to part, but will most likely perish together in poverty along the cold river bank. The economic condition of the couple does not bode well for the future of their physical survival, let alone the survival of their romance. The 'hot tears' that fall from the lovers' eyes perhaps constitute the most powerful image in this song, starkly contrasted to the bleak, cold, watery backdrop of the Tone River - these 'hot tears' are the liquid manifestation of the human spirit that lives on in spite of the dehumanizing conditions of modern society.

"The Boatman's Song" is thus a lugubrious tune that captures the hopelessness of the Japanese urban working classes. As in the case of "Katyūsha's Song," the lovers are doomed to meet a sad fate as a result of a harsh modern society that dehumanizes its subjects. Whereas Katyūsha and Nehklyudov see the possibility of hope in the melting of the snow and the coming spring, the only hope for the Boatman and his wife is in the form of a distant, cold, unreachable autumn moon. We thus see an increasingly hopeless, negative representation of romance in "The Boatman's Ditty" as compared to the earlier "Katyūsha's Song." Perhaps the most notable distinction between these two songs, however, is the emergent sense of longing for a distant past 'Japan' that can be noted in "The Boatman's Ditty." Whereas "Katyūsha's Song" focuses on a 'present' characterized by a struggle towards a more enlightened future, "The Boatman's Ditty" floats precariously along an uncertain, abysmal 'present', sadly looking back to the withered, distant images of a past 'Japan'. The withered past, symbolized in the flowerless *susuki*, is seen as a kind of encroaching weed that engulfs the uncertain waters of 'present' Japan. In "The Boatman's Ditty," we thus see the seeds of the emergent 'past' take hold of the enka imaginary. In the context of this song, however, the 'past' is still an amorphous, dark cloud that hangs over the present. It is not until "Tokyo March" of 1929 that we first see evidence of a clearly perceived fissure between 'past' and 'present' Japan.

"Tokyo March" ("*Tokyo kōshinkyoku*") (1929)

Nakayama Shinpei's 1929 hit, "Tokyo March," sets a characteristically Japanese *yonanuki* melody against a western style march rhythm in 2/4 time. Nakayama's decision to employ a march rhythm holds particular symbolic significance, given that the song's lyrics evoke the theme of the Japanese nation's 'march' towards modernization. The "Tokyo March" may thus be considered an elegy to a 'past' Japan – a traditional, non-westernized 'Japan' that has been left behind by the onward march of time and history. In its employment of the *yonanuki* scale set to western tonal harmonizations, the "Tokyo March" resembles closely Nakayama Shinpei's previous works such as "The Boatman's Ditty"; however, the sorrowful longing for a 'past' Japan evoked through Saijō Yaso's lyrics mark a new development within the genre of *enka*. It is within this early Shōwa era song that I trace the first clear instance of a poetic awareness of a disjuncture between past, traditional 'Japan' and a present, modern, westernized 'Japan'.

As is often the case in the Japanese language, particularly when it is employed for poetic expression, within the lyrics of "Tokyo March" it is difficult to discern the identity of the speaking subject. The opening lines, '*Mukashi koishi Ginza no yanagi/ Ada na toshima o dare ga shiro*', are shrouded in ambiguity. In my accompanying translation, I have offered two different possible interpretations of the first line:

> The Ginza willow that longs for the past,
> (Or: O, Ginza willow, how you make me long for the past,)

The first possible interpretation, 'The Ginza willow that longs for the past' is a direct translation of the original Japanese. However, in this direct translation the ambiguity of the Japanese poetic language is lost. In the original Japanese, it is unclear as to whether the poet is projecting his 'longing for the past' upon the symbol of the Ginza willow, or if the Ginza willow constitutes an anthropomorphized longing subject. This ambiguity surrounding the identity of the speaking (or, perhaps, *singing*) subject is further complicated in the next line, in which the figure of a bitter 'older woman' is introduced (The bitterness of an older woman – who knows of such things today?). At this point three alternate interpretive possibilities are presented to the listener – this song may be sung from the perspective of a poet who observes a willow and an old woman in Ginza, or, from the imagined perspective of a tree that is compared to an old woman, or, from the perspective of an old woman who compares herself to the old willow. Alternatively, a fourth possible interpretation may be that the lyrics of this song intentionally avoid the identification of a clear subject position, in order to realize a kind of composite, generic Japanese 'subject' – an amorphous entity that envelops the entire city-space of modern Tokyo, including the observing poet, the older woman, and of course, the Ginza willow. The polysemous implications of the Japanese language allow for all four of these possible interpretations. In the context of this song, then, it is the conjured, composite poetic symbol of 'Tokyo' that longs for the past.

Within the context of "Tokyo March", the city of Tokyo is both a place and a poetic amalgam of the various urban subjectivities that inhabit its imagined borders. This imagined city-scape is portrayed as a place of desperate sorrow, ironic dejection and cultural ruination; these disconsolate sentiments are conveyed in terms of the impossibility of meaningful, romantic love within a soulless metropolis. The lyrics of "Tokyo March" are tainted by the poet's realization that the freedoms allowed within a liberal, westernized 'Japan'– such as 'dancing, listening to jazz, drinking liqueurs late into the night' – inevitably lead to spiritual emptiness and depression, symbolized in the 'dancer's rain of tears'. The bitterness of the older woman (*toshima*) may thus be interpreted as the bitterness of the Japanese nation, whose hopes for *Taishō Demokurashii* were gradually shattered by the realization that with the adoption of western liberal values comes the gradual erosion of traditional 'Japanese' culture.

What is mourned in the "Tokyo March" is thus the disintegration of a traditional 'Japan'. As in the case of "The Boatman's Ditty," in this song traditional Japanese poetic images are evoked as somehow ruined or corrupted by modernity. Whereas "The Boatman's Ditty" evokes the images of the *susuki* grass and the moon, "Tokyo March" pairs the moon with the willow tree. In both songs we thus see the traditional Japanese poetic technique of pairing contrasting images of the natural world. Just as the *susuki* grasses were withered and impotent in "The Boatman's Ditty," however, the beauty of the Ginza willow is lost, or overshadowed by the bustling, hectic cityscape of rush-hour traffic and the artificial glitz of 'colourful Asakusa'. As for the moon, even this eternal heavenly body is obscured by the 'roof of a department store'. In this last, ironic line of the song, it is dryly observed that the modern city interposes upon nature, but also obscures, distorts and corrupts the beauty of traditional Japanese natural world.

The irreverent department store roof may also be interpreted, however, as a symbol of the intrusive, divisive tendencies of modernity. Namely, the sharp, western architectural angle of the department store roof constitutes a troubling visual obstruction that disrupts the traditional Japanese poetic gaze. In this interpretation, the poet's gaze seeks 'Mushashino's moon', but the poet's scopophilic desire to enjoy the beauty of the moon is thwarted by an unsightly modern structure. The traditional Japanese poet is thus rendered impotent in the modern world – his desire is stifled, and frustrated.[10] The modern building causes the poet to be fissured from a traditional, natural Japanese landscape, once his source of inspiration.

The 'department store roof' is thus a symbolic barrier that results in the Japanese poet to be fissured, and painfully distanced from his own poetic tradition. While the poet feels alienated from the Japanese poetic tradition, he is not the only urbanite who is inflicted with a feeling of pervasive emptiness – in the pithy line, it is observed that 'Just as Tokyo is expansive, the love in this town is small.' The tears of the dancer, and of the weeping office workers, can thus be attributed to the sorrow felt by a nation whose subjects' traditional way of life has been corrupted, and lost. In the absence of meaningful relationships, the urbanites fill the void of their existence with casual encounters, facilitated by modern amenities such as buses and subways.

Just as the two modern lovers race towards their illicit rendez-vous, Tokyo marches along a path to cultural ruination. 'The stop of love' that is 'fast approaching' can be interpreted as a comment on the immense speed with which Japanese society transformed in the Taishō era. Faced with such a rapid pace of urbanization and westernization, the Ginza willow is rendered a pitiful, forgotten remnant. It stands in the busy Ginza street, and with the construction of each new tall building, it becomes increasingly fissured, obfuscated from the Japanese gaze - as Tokyō marches on, the willow remains static. In "Tokyo March" we thus see the emergence of a poetic fissure between a past and present Japan – a rupture that is painfully evoked as a negative side-effect of Japan's rapid modernization.

"Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" ("*Sake wa namida ka tameiki ka*") (1931) and "Yearning for a Shadow" (1932)

In the early 1930's, a new prodigious talent emerged in the world of enka composition; Koga Masao, a Tokyo factory worker's son turned enka composer, was to take the genre as defined by Nakayama Shinpei, and transmute it into a musical and poetic form that most closely resembles contemporary enka. Koga is credited with defining the 'Koga melody', a musical hybrid of Nakayama's *yonanuki* scale and western triadic melody. The 'Koga melody' has been adopted as one of the enduring musical *kata*, or patterned forms, of contemporary enka. Koga's hit, "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" ("*Sake wa namida ka tameiki ka*") (1931) marked the first appearance of the Koga melody, and thus the crystallization of enka into its contemporary musical lexicon.

Along with the Koga melody, the subject matter of the accompanying lyrics to "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?", penned by Takahashi Kikutarō, also came to be taken up by later enka lyricists as an often emulated poetic *kata*. This lyrical *kata* consists of love, or *miren* (yearning for lost love), codified into a patterned form of expression. This pattern is realized in the poetic trope of the lonely drinker of sake, who pines for his/her lover. From the time of Koga's "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" countless enka songs reiterate variants of this poetic trope. What may be seen as thematic monotony or redundancy, from a western perspective, however, is in fact a careful tradition of poetic patterning. As in the case of all Japanese artistic traditions, within enka, the careful emulation of the past model, with only the possibility of slight variation, is the ultimate object of artistic expression.

Contrasting the lyrics of "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and that of Koga's later composition, "Yearning for a Shadow," we see that the traditional Japanese poetic emotion of *miren* (yearning for lost love/ feelings of regret over lost love) is expressed in both songs, albeit with minor variations in the common thematic *kata*. In "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?", *miren* is represented as an overwhelming sorrow that drowns the *kokoro* (heart/soul) of the lonely drinker; whereas "Yearning for a Shadow" presents a poetic subject who is overcome by the grips of an amorphous, black 'shadow of yearning'.

Both songs thus evoke a poetic subject who is unable to overcome a formidable sense of longing, or *miren*. Within "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" *sake* is a poetic image that represents a false, artificial warmth the drinker imbibes as a means of soothing the cold emptiness of his heart. In the context of this song, the drinker's symbolic 'throwing' of his sighs, tears, and troubles into his drink does not free him of his sorrow, as he is about to drink down, and thereby further internalize the troubling concoction of his 'sad heart'. The drinker is thus trapped in a negative cycle of mounting depression: the sake that provides momentary relief is also a liquid manifestation of sorrow itself. In "Yearning for a Shadow," the attempt to relieve *miren* is not accomplished through the drinking of sake, but the poetic subject attempts to ease his sorrow by music, by 'plucking the strings' of his guitar. As in the case of the lonely drinker, the man who tries to drown his sorrows in music is also unsuccessful in liberating his heart from the ominous black shadow of *miren.* Just as the drinker is trapped in a cycle of hopeless longing encapsulated in the final unanswerable question - '*nokoru kokoro wo nanto shō*?' 'What do I do with the feelings I have left for her? – the lonesome guitarist is also reduced to a life 'shrouded in darkness'. In both songs we see the darkness of *miren* accentuated by means of contrast to the suggested redness of the lost lover's lips. This fragmented image of the forgotten lover's body serves as a contrast to the bleak, present realities of the sorrowful poetic subjects. In these two songs, we thus see that "Yearning for a Shadow" marks a patterned poetic emulation of the poetic trope of the pining lover as presented in "Is Sake Tears of Sighs?"

In the context of previous enka, what is notable with regards to Koga's "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and "Yearning for a Shadow," is that both depict love, or *miren*, in a highly sentimentalized, and yet notably *abstract* manner. Whereas earlier enka such as "Katyūsha's Song," "The Boatman's Ditty," and "Tokyo March", present the possibility of romantic love as being hindered by the dehumanizing effects of modern society, within the context of Koga's songs, lost love, or *miren*, is not tied to a particular social condition.[11] In Koga's songs, however, we have this poetic trope of lost love made simultaneously personal *and* generic: it is personal in the sense that the sentimental melodrama that is conveyed is strictly an internal matter affecting the poetic subject; however, the over-personalization of the melodrama renders it *generic*, in that it is not rooted in a given social context - the 'lost love' could be that of *anyone.*

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[11] I would like to clarify that since Koga has a prolific career as a song writer, some of his later works can be classified as 'contemporary enka'. Therefore, some of his contemporary enka songs include references to certain marginal figures within Japanese society, and may be considered less 'abstract'. My observation here is specifically in regards to enka of the early Shōwa period, of which "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and "Yearning for a Shadow" are exemplary.

Taken out of their musical historical context, the generic sentimentality of Koga's songs may be interpreted as essentially apolitical, subjective expressions of 'sorrow'. However, an examination of the history of enka leading up to Koga's compositions reveals that the patterned sorrow that emerges in his works has its roots in earlier enka, which was concerned with the expression of the hardships experienced by the underprivileged of Japan during modernization. Moreover, the sorrow that is expressed throughout the history of early enka can be linked to the trauma of the entire Japanese nation as its traditional culture and landscape was ruthlessly transformed into a westernized simulacrum of its former self. What must be recognized is that although in "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and "Yearning for a Shadow," we see enka evolve into a codified expression of an apolitical, abstract, generic sentimentality, that this sentimentality has its roots in the cultural traumas suffered by the Japanese nation during the modern era - - and that the poetic emotion of *miren*, so powerfully evoked Koga's compositions can be interpreted as a codified, abstracted expression of the Japanese nation's longing for its traditional, now-corrupted, 'past'.

Conclusion

The *miren* that is conjured in Koga's early Showa works, "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and "Yearning for a Shadow", can thus be seen as adumbrated within the poetic evocations of failed, or problematic 'love' as depicted in "Katyūsha's Song," "The Boatman's Ditty" and "Tokyo March." Whereas both "Katyūsha's Song" and

"The Boatman's Ditty" are concerned with the negative effects of the industrial society upon the moral and spiritual life of modern social subjects, it is not until "Tokyo March" that we see an heightened awareness of a Japanese 'past' that is being lost in the process of modernization. The sad longing for a past lover that is abstracted within "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and "Yearning for a Shadow," can thus be seen as growing out of the yearning for a Japanese traditional 'past' that is conveyed in "Tokyo March." Koga's early works see the emergence of a stylized lexicon of 'longing for the past'; later, the music that comes to be known as 'contemporary enka' synthesizes the apolitical Shōwa enka of Koga, and the earlier, more socially conscious enka, conflating the longing for a 'lost lover' with the longing for a 'past Japan'. It is to this, 'contemporary enka' that I will shift my focus in the third and final chapter of my thesis.

Chapter 3:

Contemporary Enka: The Lingering Ghost of a Present 'Past'

> *Are you sure there isn't a ghost that has latched onto your room?*
> *A little one, so little it can fit in your hand?*
> *This endearing ghost -*
> *Its name is 'The Past'.*
> *If you by chance allow this ghost to latch on to you,*
> *That'll be the end of you!*
> *You ask me why - well, it's because this ghost is a fairy tale,*
> *And it makes you feel good with lies like this:*
> *'On that day, once upon a time, you were strong.'*
> *'On that day, once upon a time, you were wise.'*
> *'On that day, once upon a time, you were happy.'*
> *With its 'once upon a time, 'once upon a time',*
> *It whisks you off into a wistful dream, and that will be the end of you!*
> *So you better watch out,*
> *For that pesky ghost called 'the past'!*
>
> from "The Past"("*Mukashi*"), performed by Miyako Harumi (2003).

Given that contemporary enka functions to evoke a sense of the 'past', the above enka lyrics can perhaps be interpreted as an ironic, self-reflexive admonition directed at Japanese enka fans: be warned that enka is a 'pesky ghost' that 'latches on' to the inner recesses of the cultural imaginary, enticing its listeners to lose themselves in a fairy tale world of the 'past'. Within this song, the 'past' (*mukashi*) is thus anthropomorphized into a ghostly, humanoid companion - a kind of supernatural trickster figure - that lures its unsuspecting victim into a dream world, or into a fairy tale (*mukashi banashi*) divorced from present reality. Although the song centers on the admonition - 'If you by chance allow this ghost to latch on to you, / That'll be the end of you!' – this warning is expressed in a decidedly ironic, comedic context. As a result, the singer's seemingly grave admonition concerning the 'pesky ghost called The Past' may be interpreted as teasing or scolding rather than overtly threatening. The ironic humour of this piece is largely realized within the accompanying music: the introductory verse, consisting of Miyako Harumi's folk-style singing accompanied by *shamisen*, is absurdly transformed into an over-the-top, over-produced, 'rock and roll cabaret'. With the entrance of the background rock and roll music, the quintessential enka singer, Miyako Harumi, is transported from a uniquely Japanese musical context to the imagined stage of a Broadway musical. As a singer belonging to the sub-genre of *do*-enka, which can be roughly translated as 'extremely authentic enka', Miyako Harumi's voice has come to symbolize an essential 'past' Japan– and thus the transplantation of her voice to an artificial western 'rock musical' is all the more incongruous, unexpected, and comical. The irony in this song is self-reflexive, and postmodern, in that the enka singer draws attention to the artifice of enka as a formulaic genre evoking an essentialized vision of 'the past'. As in the case of the majority of cultural products bearing the label of postmodernity, however, within Miyako Harumi's "The Past," the possibility of social commentary, or critique, is tempered by an ironic ambivalence.

Within the ironical musico-poetic context of "The Past," however, what is exposed is the artifice of *auration* as it occurs within enka. Although enka has been analyzed as a genre that evinces a nostalgic longing, I would argue that the affect of 'nostalgia' does not fully account for the complex processes of 'past creation' that can be identified within this genre.[1] Whereas 'nostalgia' implies the longing for a past moment, 'auration' implies the conjuring of an imagined past moment, constructed according to *present* desires. The two terms, 'nostalgia' and 'auration', need not be considered mutually exclusive: auration can be said to arise as a result of nostalgic impulse, and likewise, a nostalgic longing may inadvertently contribute to auration. My intention in devising the term 'auration', however, is to challenge the notion of an essential 'past' within enka's imaginary. The use of the term 'nostalgia' in relation to enka inadvertently gives rise to problematic essentialisms concerning Japan's traditional 'past', insofar as a nostalgic desire hinges on the assumed existence of an authentic 'past' moment. Auration, on the other hand, requires no such assumption – its domain is the present, albeit suffused with the trace of a 'pesky ghost called The Past', a conjured prophylactic cure for present anxieties.

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[1] Within her doctoral dissertation on enka, "Shaping Tears of a Nation: An Ethnography of Emotion in Japanese Popular Song", Christine Reiko Yano analyzes enka as a genre that is characterized by patterned forms of nostalgic longing. In her chapter entitled, "Longing for Home: The *Kata* of Nostalgia," Yano theorizes that "the Japanese attitude toward the past neither encourages a sense of

Within Miyako Harumi's "The Past," the conjuring of the 'ghost called The Past' is thus conceived of as the substitution of reality with a comfortable 'fairy tale'- and this act of (re)writing the past as a fictitious, present narrative can be interpreted as an act of past creation, or auration.[2] While "The Past" is atypical enka song, in that it offers a self-reflexive comment on the genre as a whole, it is

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continuity or discontinuity. Rather, the trend, at least in the enka world, seems to be to make the past a kind of internal exotic, which is at once removed from the lives of most Japanese, yet enjoys a position reputedly central to the Japanese identity"(434). While I would not argue with the idea that 'the past' is exotified in Japanese enka, in my opinion, such an exotification of an imagined temporal moment *implies* a kind of disjuncture within the time flow of the Japanese cultural imaginary. My aim in this thesis is to investigate this perceived disjuncture; and I have thus chosen to draw upon Benjamin's theories on the 'aura' as a means of theorizing this temporal disjuncture perceived in cultural media.

[2] In direct translation, the word '*mukashi*' is a literary word that signifies not so much 'the past' but a 'time of old'. The Japanese equivalent of the western 'fairy tale' is the *mukashi-banashi* (which can be roughly translated as, 'stories of times of old'). Without exception, *mukashi-banashi* begin with the phrase '*mukashi, mukashi...*', implying 'once upon a time'; likewise, Japanese translations of western fairy-tales also begin with the phrase, '*mukashi, mukashi...*' An alternate translation of the title of Miyako Harumi's song may thus be "Once Upon a Time."

my position that this postmodern enka was composed in response to other, more 'typical' enka songs that serve to aurate an imagined past into existence. In this chapter, I will now move to an analysis of selected, representative enka songs, spanning the 1950's to the 1980's. In my analysis I will demonstrate how auration operates, within a musico-poetic context, to evoke an idealized vision of 'the past'. Further, I would like to show how enka's imagined 'past' is linked to an idealized national, 'Japanese' past. In my analysis of enka as a conduit for the perpetuation of nationalistic affect, I will draw upon the theorists that were discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis: namely, Anderson, Gellner, and Baudrillard. As well, I will attempt to illuminate the self-Orientalistic implications of enka's evocation of a 'Japanese' past. It is thus my aim to summon this 'pesky ghost called The Past', and to expose some of its mischievous designs.

From *Nihonjin-ron* to *Enka-ron*: Critiquing Enka Scholars' Patterning of the Genre

Before moving to a discussion of selected enka songs, I would first like to offer a brief commentary on how contemporary enka has been discussed by Japanese and western academics.[3] Japanese writings on enka (both academic and journalistic) tend to associate the genre with an essentialized conception of 'the heart/soul of Japan' (*nihon no kokoro*). Such writings that wax poetic about the Japanese heart/soul and enka can be classified under the broad heading of *nihonjin-*

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[3] In my research I was unable to locate any substantial academic literature on enka by Japanese scholars. Even in the West, few articles have been written on enka – the only scholar who has devoted her career to the study of enka is Christine Reiko Yano, based at the University of Hawai'i.

ron. As discussed in the first chapter, *nihonjin-ron* is a popular rhetoric that emerged in 1960's Japan, which served to extol the essential character of the Japanese as 'hard-working', 'community-oriented', and bound together by a shared, essential Japanese spirit.

Yoshikawa Seiichi's *Kanashimi wa nihonjin* (*Sadness is the Japanese People*) is a classic example of a journalistic, *nihonjin-ron* analysis of enka. Within the introductory chapter of this work, Yoshikawa makes the following sweeping claim:

> Since ancient times, the Japanese have preferred lugubrious melodies. This is still true today. And so, one can say that the melodies of enka are the standard melodies of the Japanese people. Above all, to speak of enka is to speak of the Japanese people and to speak of Japan" (Yoshikawa, 8, my translation).[4]

Yoshikawa's claim that enka melodies speak to an essential 'Japan', however, is never fully analyzed throughout the course of his text. His central thesis consists of a supposition that the Japanese people are by nature more attuned to 'sad' melodies. He writes: "when considering 'sadness' in music, we see that all Japanese, even the younger generations, feel an affinity to this sentiment that is often expressed in enka, and that this sense of 'sadness' is a common thread that runs through all music that is popular in Japan"(16, my translation). Making such vast, unsubstantiated generalizations, Yoshikawa proceeds to effuse over how the sadness (*kanashimi*) that is communicated through enka 'hits the hearts of us Japanese' (*watashitachi nihonjin no kokoro o utsu*). While the *nihonjin-ron* aspect of Yoshikawa's text is deplorable from an academic standpoint, it is perhaps unfair to judge a journalistic work with the same critical scrutiny as one would an academic one. Perhaps it can be said that a popular work such as Yoshikawa's *Sadness is the Japanese People* is valuable in that it allows us to see how the genre of enka is commonly associated with the imagined community of the Japanese nation, and how this imagined community is seen as an entity that is forged through the communal sharing of poeticized sorrow (*kanashimi*).

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[4] The original Japanese is as follows: "*Korai, nihonjin wa kanashimi ni michita merodii o konomu. Kyō in itaru made, konomu hito ga ooi. Shitagatte, nihonjin no minzoku-teki kihon mrodii wa enka no merodii to ieru. Soreyue, enka o kataru oto wa nihonjin o ataru koto deari, nihon o kataru koto dearu.*"

It would be erroneous to make the assumption, however, that all Japanese writings on enka are essentialist, *nihonjin-ron* texts with little or no academic merit. Yamaori Tetsuo's *Enka to nihonjin* (*Enka and the Japanese People*), while it verges on *nihonjin-ron*, offers an insightful comparison between enka and *tanka* poetry. Within this work, however, Yamaori states that his aim is to explore his own subjective fascination with enka; and his somewhat impressionistic, meandering text is framed by the underlying assumption that *all* Japanese people share his love for enka, which somehow encapsulates the hear[illegible]soul of Japan. Music journalist, Okano Ben, provides an in-depth, historical, cross-cultural comparison of enka in Korea and Japan; but again, the aim of his admittedly non-academic[5] work is to uncover how Japanese enka encapsulates an essential 'Japanese identity'(14). The in-depth historiography of enka provided by Soeda Tomomichi, however, cannot be so easily dismissed as 'essentialist' or 'journalistic' writing. Despite the detailed descriptive historical documentation of the emergence of enka, however, this work provides little in the way of theorizing as to *why* enka has come to assume such a prominent role in the Japanese cultural imaginary, and moreover, why this genre is so easily linked to an essential Japanese heart/soul (*kokoro*).

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[5] In the original Japanese, Okada makes the following off-the-cuff aside: "*gachi gachi no akademizmu de ron o susmeru tsumori wa nai*"(14). Roughly translated, 'I have no intention to proceed with my theorizations in a strict academic fashion'.

In the western world, cultural anthropologist, Christine Reiko Yano is currently the primary (if not *only*) authority on enka music. In her article entitled, "Covering Disclosures: Practices of Intimacy, Hierarchy, and Authenticity in a Japanese Popular Music Genre," she observes the following in regards to enka's emergence as a genre associated with the heart/soul of the Japanese:

> The defining moment in enka's history came in the 1970's amidst a growing sociopolitical climate of cultural nationalism, during which the Japanese recording industry began to differentiate between popular music with overt ties to Euro-American pop.. and that interpreted as indigenous to Japan. Within that context, enka became 'Japan's Song' (*nihon no uta*) (194).

While this historical observation is illuminating, it is my opinion that such a socio-economic analysis of enka only provides a partial explanation for enka's association with the heart/soul of Japan. While I would agree that record companies, in conjunction with the Japanese government, have no doubt exercised varying degrees of control over the peoples' musical tastes at different points in Japanese social history, this does not negate the fact that this 'control' is exercised through musico-poetic processes as well as marketing strategies. What interests me in this thesis is thus the question as to *how* enka evokes the heart/soul of Japan, and this question must be approached by analyzing the musico-poetic processes at play within the genre.

As a cultural anthropologist, however, Yano's work focuses on an examination of the social processes involved in the production of enka, and thereby tends to ignore the question of *how* enka operates on an artistic, that is, musico-poetic level. Her major work, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song*, based on her PhD dissertation, adopts a novel approach to the analysis of the Japanese enka world. Namely, she draws upon the Japanese philosophical notion of *kata*, or patterned form, as a means of analyzing the production and consumption of enka. According to Yano, each aspect of the enka industry is patterned by various sets of *kata*; and this gives rise to a highly repetitive, if not formulaic genre. Yano demonstrates, however, that as in the case of all Japanese traditional art forms, the aesthetic beauty of enka lies in its detailed observance of *kata*; and thus it may be seen as Orientalist to judge such a patterned art form according to western artistic ideals of innovation and individual expression.

While Yano's theoretical approach to the study of enka is commendable in that it marks a move to adapt western cultural anthropology to a uniquely Japanese context, in my reading of her work, her approach becomes problematic when she applies the notion of *kata*, or patterning, to the way in which affect is realized in enka song. While I believe that a strong case can be made for the position that enka songs are patterned by affective *kata*, it is difficult to explicate such *kata* without examining the interplay of poetry and music within the enka songs in question. Although Yano quotes extensively from enka songs lyrics, she tends to extract one or two lines from each song, without ever analyzing a complete song as a cohesive poetic unit. Further, within her extensive text, she fails to discuss the enka lyrics in relation to their accompanying music. It seems that before one can construct a solid argument concerning the way in which the affect of nostalgia is realized within enka, one must first provide close 'readings' and 'hearings' of these songs to demonstrate *how* such an affect is evoked. My critique of Yano's work, however, is perhaps not so much a reflection of any shortcoming on the part of her anthropological analysis, but more a reflection of my own expectations arising from my disciplinary leanings as a student of literature and music. All the same, I find it disconcerting that within her extensive work on enka, Yano avoids providing close examinations of enka songs as cultural texts. In my thesis I have thus set out to fill this 'gap' in the extant work on enka, and to explore *how* the Japanese nation is evoked through nostalgic longing within enka song.

In my reading of Yano's work, it seems that her *general* observations on enka song (that is, observations not based on close examinations of enka songs as 'texts', but on the operations of enka in the social sphere) give rise to certain notable, problematic essentialisms concerning nostalgia in enka song. In the emphatic final paragraph of *Tears of Longing*, Yano writes:

> The enka imaginary constitutes a 'Japan' uncertain about its relationship to the outside world and to its own past. But instead of confronting these uncertainties, the imaginary withdraws into an insular notion of a common heart. The tales it tells – of emotional pain, of failed romance, of longing for *furusato*, of nostalgia for a past just out of reach, of suffering as moral virtue – provoke tears of empathy and recognition. In these tears lie the critical links of the self to the imaginary, of the home to the nation, and ultimately, of Japan to 'Japan' (179).

In the poetically phrased last sentence, we see that for Yano, ultimately, the tears that are 'provoked' by enka constitute an external manifestation of internal affective imaginings of Japanese nationhood, or 'common heart'. The underlying assumption in Yano's concluding paragraph is thus that a 'real' Japan stands in binary opposition to the imagined 'Japan'; the 'tears of longing' for the imagined community therefore encapsulate a liminal space, one that crosses the imagined divide between one's subjective experience of a 'real' Japan and the imagined experience of belonging to the larger Japanese social imaginary. However, it may be argued that within this affective community, the subjective 'self' is always already a socially constructed position, and moreover, a position that is continuously redefined through cultural media. Although Yano concludes her work with a list of comfortable binary relations - "self to the imaginary,.. the home to the nation… Japan to 'Japan'" - I would propose that the symbolic 'tears' evoked through enka do not exist in a liminal space between such binaries, but that they are the side-effect of a cyclic relationship between the self and the larger imaginary. This entire cycle of national identity construction, occurring within a musico-poetic dimension, can be interpreted as *liminal*, in the sense that it is in a constant process of creation - - one that by definition eschews a comfortable point of enclosure within a binary model. Further, I would argue that an examination of the poetic processes behind enka song reveals that within this genre, Japan and "Japan" do not exist in opposition, but in fact, they exist as superimposed and interwoven layers of a porous cultural fabric.

The reconceptualization of nostalgia in enka as 'auration', a present process of 'past creation', then, allows the critic to avoid essentialist associations concerning the existence of a Japan and a "Japan", a longed for past moment and a definitive present. I will now turn my attention to an analysis of three representational enka songs, "Apple Folk Song"(*Ringo oiwake*), "Mother"(*Ofukuro-san*) and "Boat Song"(*Funa-uta*), in hopes of demonstrating *how* the affect of nostalgia, coupled with the process of auration, can be located in the interplay of poetry and music.

Apple Folk Song (*Ringo Oiwake*) (1952)

"Apple Folk Song" ("*Ringo oiwake"*), is an enka piece of enduring popularity that has come to be associated with the distinctive voice of a young Mizora Hibari (1939 – 1988), Japan's iconic enka 'diva'. Within the carefully crafted lyrics of "Apple Folk Song," Mizora's voice shifts between two different poetic subject positions, that of an omniscient 'story-teller', and the secondary narrating subject, the character of the young country girl. This split in the identity of the singing subject corresponds to a temporal fissure between a present and an imagined 'past' Japan, an imagined split that is problematized by the singular 'present-ness' of the performer's voice. The composite visual and aural poetic image of the fluttering apple blossom encapsulates the divided poetic subject's sorrowful longing for an uncorrupted, culturally homogenous 'Japanese' past. In this song we thus hear the evocation of a sad longing for an imagined 'past' Japan realized within a musico-poetic medium.

Within "Apple Folk Song," the musico-poetic longing for an imagined 'past' is expressed through a culturally hybrid aesthetic dimension. The song opens with a western-style orchestral string passage featuring a solo flute, evoking a western romantic musical context which soon fades into the background upon the arrival of a Japanese folk rhythm.[6] Upon the third statement of the *oiwake* folk rhythm, Mizora Hibari's voice enters, sounding a gentle Japanese folk vibrato on the longer, held notes. The lyrics that are voiced consist of traditional Japanese poetic images – namely, the flower blossom, moonlight, and the fluttering petal. Just as the folk rhythm is transmuted to a western beat, the traditional image of the cherry blossom is replaced by the foreign apple blossom. As a commercial fruit that was imported into Japan, the apple blossom signifies a modern replacement for of the traditional Japanese cherry blossom. Owing to the fact that the apple blossom resembles the cherry blossom in its pallor and delicate beauty, however, the apple blossom can perhaps be interpreted, in the context of "Apple Folk Song," as a transmuted, hybrid, 'modernized' cherry blossom. The image of the fluttering apple blossom concludes the first verse, as Mizora's lilting, extended, descending folk melisma mimics the downward motion of the falling apple petals. The hybrid aesthetic of "Apple Folk Song" is thus powerfully sublimated in the final aural/visual composite image of the fluttering apple blossom.

The fluttering apple blossom is thus a culturally hybrid image, realized within Mizora Hibari's traditional 'Japanese' folk vocal-technique. The exquisite melisma of the fluttering blossom tapers off at the end of the line, 'in the moonlit night, gently…'. This same line is repeated a second time at the end of the first verse, however, this time the elaborate melisma is shortened to the musical 'sigh' of a downward 'ah...' This musical 'sigh' remains suspended, unresolved, setting an uncertain, lugubrious mood for the entrance of the singer's *serifu*, a narrative spoken word expository passage common in enka song. At this point the identity of the singing subject is disrupted, as Mizora delivers the *serifu* in the voice of a young country girl, adopting the northern, rural dialect of the Tsugaru region. During the *serifu*, the oboe in the backing orchestra repeats the melody of the opening verse. The end of the *serifu* is then punctuated by the oboe's restatement of the extended melisma of the fluttering blossom: the melisma is thus employed as a structural unifying device. After the *serifu*, the original singing subject, the 'story-teller', returns, as the piece ends with a recapitulation of the first verse. The song thus concludes with a restatement of the musical 'sigh' of the first verse, although this last sigh is held longer than that of the first verse, as Mizora's voice rings out over the fading background orchestra.

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[6] To be precise, an *oiwake* is a horseman's folk song from northern Japan. Since Mizora Hibari was from northern Japan, her songs typically reflect her association with this region. It is common for Japanese enka singers to perform songs that evoke a sense of their 'authentic' *furusato*, or regional homeland.

In the vocal shift between the traditional singing voice of the 'story-teller' and the spoken, Tsugaru girl's voice of the *serifu*, Mizora alternates between two opposing narrative/subject personas. The two, fissured subject positions occupied by the singer gives rise to the effect that the 'Tsugaru girl' of the *serifu* occupies an imagined, or narrated past moment in relation to the 'story-teller' of the opening verse. The story-teller's phrase, 'The Tsugaru girl cried, so they said,' implies that the story of the Tsugaru girl is part of a folk narrative tradition. In particular, the use of the condensed moniker, 'Tsugaru girl' (*Tsugaru musume*), as opposed to 'the girl from Tsugaru' (*Tsugaru no musume*), suggests that this young girl is a character from an oral folk tradition – one that has assumed a kind of 'legendary' status. The

Tsugaru girl's placement within such an imagined tradition of Japanese folk legend reinforces her existence within a 'past' Japan.

If "Apple Folk Song" was analyzed as a poem, without considering the accompanying music, one may interpret this poem as consisting of two poetic subjects, a present figure who narrates, and a past figure that is narrated. However, as a song that is performed by a single performer, Mizora Hibari, when considering the musical dimension of this piece, one must recognize that both present and past poetic subjects are sounded by the same identifiable, iconic voice. Although Mizora alters her voice to perform the two different subject positions, ultimately, these two subjects are heard as two different performances of a single voice. When considering how the two subject positions are thus united by Mizora's singular voice within the aural dimension, the divisive temporal fissure suggested by the lyrics comes to be confused, or problematized. That is, the narrative 'present-ness' of the story-teller is conflated with the 'past-ness' of her narrated subject – the present and the past thus come to coexist on a super-imposed ontological continuum.

Identifying the directionality of narrative desire is problematic within such a blurred, and thus effectively 'direction-less' temporal continuum. On first hearing, it may appear that narrative desire follows that of the story-teller, who attempts to rescue, or distill an imagined past moment of Japanese folk history from the flow of real time. However, within the speech of the Tsugaru girl, it is revealed that she, too, is longing for her lost mother, thus signifying her desire for 'a past within a narrated past'. Moreover, the confounding reality remains that both figures, the story-teller and the Tsugaru girl, are realized by the singular voice of the same performer – Mizora Hibari, whose voice unfolds in *real* time. In the context of "Apple Folk Song," then, the question remains as to which past is being rescued, and by which present? This blurring of temporal markers and the resultant confusion surrounding the identification of the directionality of narrative desire is related to the breakdown of literary and poetic analysis when applied to a 'musical performance of poetry', that is, to an analysis of song. In the case of "Apple Folk Song," for example, the concept of the 'symbolic textual voice', is complicated by the undeniable audial presence of the singer's voice that unfolds in real time (whether as a recording or a live performance).

Given that the dual symbolic voices of the story-teller and the Tsugaru girl are realized by the same performer's recorded, 'real' voice, their respective associations to past and present temporal markers can be amalgamated into a singular, transcendent moment of a continuously unfolding musico-poetic 'present'. The cyclic movement of this unfolding present is represented in the recurring, unifying aural 'image' of the fluttering apple blossom. The directionality of this poetic melisma, is of course downwards – the apple blossom is fuittering to the ground, signaling its immanent destruction, and yet its arrival at this final moment is continuously averted, it is thus forever suspended in an ever-unfolding present. Within this ephemeral present moment shaped by the falling apple blossom, the singer's desire, although fissured into the desires of two different subject personas, is in fact a singular longing for an imagined 'past'. The story of the young girl, encapsulated in the *serifu*, is thus framed within a transcendent, poetic moment that is laid out by the story-teller. Within this poetic moment, the ephemeral apple blossom flutters in the moonlit night, suspended, transcending real time. The oboe's statement of the apple blossom's melisma during the young girl's *serifu* reinforces the notion that the young girl's story has been incorporated into a singular, transcendent musico-poetic moment symbolized by the fluttering blossom.

While this moment is timeless, it is thus also, paradoxically, 'timelessly ephemeral'. The evocation of the Japanese poetic image of the fluttering blossom is poetically linked to the Buddhistic conception of *hakanasa*, or the ephemerality of existence. Within the layered temporal continuum of "Apple Folk Song," the story-teller's mournful musical 'sigh' reflects her realization of the ephemerality of the unfolding present. This sad realization concerning the inevitable passage of time gives rise to a nostalgic longing for a 'past' as a means of reversing the inevitable flux of existence. Ironically, or perhaps paradoxically, the past has already transpired, and is thus even more 'ephemeral' than the uncertain, dwindling present moment. And yet, the imagined past is evoked as a flawed prophylaxis to assuage present fears and anxieties arising from the threat of immanent demise.

Within "Apple Folk Song," however, the present anxieties of the story-teller and the Tsugaru girl are not merely philosophical, existential ones, but rather, they are linked to the underlying fears associated with the uncertain position of marginalized figures within modern Japan. The ephemeral apple blossom may thus be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the precarious, marginal existence of the young Tsugaru girl within the larger context of the Japanese nation. While her uncertain position within the rural outskirts of Tsugaru renders her a marginal figure in the larger context of Japanese society, her traditional Japanese femininity, combined with her young age, exacerbate her vulnerability at the margins of the westernized, hegemonic social structure. In the context of this song, then, it can be said that the Buddhistic image of the fluttering flower blossom is tied to the uncertain position of the marginalized country-folk who inhabit the rural periphery of the modern Japanese nation.

The rural homeland that is narrated in "Apple Folk Song" is a place of naïveté, where the Tsugaru girl lives in harmony with the seasons of the natural world – to the extent that she seems to measure time solely according to the passage of one flower blossom to the next. This imagined folk culture that the Tsugaru girl exemplifies, belongs to a place of folk legend - framed, distilled, and immortalized within a poetic moment, albeit an ephemeral poetic moment poised at the verge of destruction.

The folk culture that is so depicted is culturally *homogenous*, in the Gellnerian conception of the term. The character of the young girl lives according to her fixed social role that is associated with a 'natural' state of the world. What can also be seen in this song, however, is the paradox of 'impossible homogeneity', as I have interpreted from Gellner's writings. Namely, this homogenous, rural, folk 'past' is in fact a present, imagined reality that is conjured into existence in response to the modern threats of industrialization, westernization and modernization. The story-teller figure's rescuing of the past moment of the Tsugaru girl can be interpreted as an evocation of a simulacrum of a 'past' Japanese folk culture that is no longer possible within the incurably hybrid, and heterogeneous modern world. The impossibility of the folk cultural homogeneity is revealed by the tragic death of the young girl's mother in the capital, for this destruction of the mother, a symbol of *furusato* itself, has irrevocably corrupted the innocence of the Tsugaru homeland. Further, the fact that it is the apple, a commercial fruit, rather than the traditional cherry blossom that comes to symbolize the *furusato* implies that the rural homeland has been irrevocably interpellated into the hegemonic world of global capitalism.

The anxiety stemming from this reality – that the *furusato* is no more – is what underlies the singer's melancholy nostalgia for the past. Encapsulated in the unfolding, transcendent poetic moment of the ever-fluttering apple blossom, a desire for an impossible, imagined 'past' is evoked. The sorrow of the conjured Tsugaru girl can thus be interpreted as an extension of the sorrow of the story-teller, who is the agent that actively summons this ghost to the present. With the descending melisma, and her extended 'sigh' that punctuates the piece, her voice weeps for an idealized 'past' Japan of impossible homogeneity.

Mizora Hibari's performance of the descending melisma can thus be interpreted as a musico-poetic evocation of traditional Japan's withering 'aura'. This imagined past is, however, a constitutive element of the unfolding present; and its existence is conjured as a flawed prophylactic to present social anxieties. The repetition of the descending melisma as a structural unifying device suggests that the piece is pervaded by an affect of nostalgia; and yet, this nostalgia is for a constructed, fictional past moment of the Tsugaru girl. The past that is the object of nostalgic desire is thus the story-teller's present construction. The location of the 'withering past' as a constitutive element of the unfolding present implies the process of auration occurring within this song. The story-teller's auration is tied to an unfolding experience of imagined Japanese nationhood conceived of in musico-poetic terms. The key feature of such an experience of imagined community is a nostalgic longing for an impossible cultural homogeneity that is conceived of as an idealized ghost, or simulacrum of a 'past' moment. And so the singer's ghostly, ethereal melisma descends, but remains suspended throughout the song, never arriving at its final, concluding point of silent oblivion - just as the aura of the Japanese nation is seen as a withered present quality, one that forever lingers, and is never fully annihilated; rather, it is continuously (re)created by the process of auration unfolding in the musico-poetic, transcendent present.

Mother (*Ofukuro-san*) (1971)

Veteran performer Mori Shinichi's weeping, emotionally charged rendition of "Mother"("*Ofukuro-san*") may be considered the defining moment of his enka career. While Misora Hibari's "Apple Folk Song" features the typical enka theme of 'the loss of the mother', Mori Shinichi's "*Ofukuro-san*" presents this theme reinterpreted from a male perspective. The expression '*ofukuro*' has no direct English equivalent, but it is a word used by men as a kind of macho, gruff, yet endearing term for their mother; a rough translation might be 'old mom', where the 'old' implies a term of endearment. Since the above English translation, "Mother," does not fully express the meaning of the original Japanese, in my analysis I will refer to this song by its original title, "*Ofukuro-san*." One may say that Mori Shinichi's hoarse, tearful enunciation of this word encapsulates the persona of the quintessential male enka performer – a jaded 'man of the world', who, despite enduring the vicissitudes of a hard fate, retains an undying love for his mother.

The male voice in enka is one that can be diagnosed as often being afflicted by a definitive *mazakon*. The term *mazakon* (mother complex), was coined by famed Japanese sociologist and feminist, Ueno Chizuko, to describe the particular, perhaps often unhealthy, attachment that many male children hold for their mothers in modern Japanese households owing to the frequent absence of the overworked father. In enka songs such as "*Ofukuro-san*," in which the figure of the mother is prominent, the unusual attachment that the male singing subject feels for his mother is typically conflated to the attachment that the man feels for his rural homeland, or *furusato*. In this sense, Christine Yano proposes that within enka, the mother is portrayed as an idealized 'biological homeland'. As in the case of "Apple Folk Song," however, the mother represents a deceased, and thus a 'past' Japanese homeland. "*Ofukuro-san*" can therefore be interpreted as the male singer's attempt to conjure the spirit of his beloved mother; and this conjuring of the 'past' mother is linked to the poetic evocation of a 'past' traditional Japanese landscape.

Within "*Ofukuro-san*," the landscape of the imagined Japanese 'mother' is realized in terms of the essential Japanese values espoused by her omniscient spirit. Each of the three verses comprising "*Ofukuro-san*" extols a particular virtue of the idealized mother, portraying her in turn as a provider of shelter, purity and warmth. Within the first verse, the image of the mother is seen as melded with the sky. As a benevolent spirit of the heavens, the mother provides her son with shelter in the form of an imagined umbrella. While the mother is thus likened to the all-encompassing heavens, this image is inverted in the second verse, as the spirit of the mother is now observed within an ephemeral flower blossom. Within this iconic blossom, the son sees his mother's *kokoro*, or heart and soul, which is characterized by a spiritual purity that inspires strength and courage. In the last verse the son's gaze shifts back to the larger natural landscape, and there he finds his mother in the surrounding mountains, once again offering warmth and protection from the harsh weather. The three verses thus present alternate poetic visions of the mother as seen through the son's gaze. The 'looking up' (*miagerya*) of the beginning and final verses is contrasted to the 'gazing into' (*mitsumerya*) of the middle verse, and thus the lyrics are unified according to the shifts in the son's gaze, from the external Japanese world to the internal, and once again returning to the outer world. The simultaneous interior/exterior location of the mother's spirit lends her an omniscient presence within the natural landscape. As an omniscient, and omnipresent spirit, the mother is seen as a figure that straddles the imagined divide between the heart/soul (*kokoro*) and external world (*yo no naka*): she is a kindly spirit who offers protection from the natural world, and yet she is also a part of the natural world – thus providing a link between nature and 'man', that is, her male progeny. The spirit of the mother can thus be interpreted as a liminal entity that crosses the divide between the eternal, numinous world of nature, and the human realm. It would be erroneous, however, to interpret this liminal mother figure according to western Romantic ideologies that relate the feminine with the instinctive world of nature.

The mother, as she is portrayed in "*Ofukuro-san,*" is in fact a metaphysical amalgam of quintessential Japanese values of purity and truth (*shinjitsu*), or true heart (*makoto*). These traditional Japanese spiritual values are envisioned in terms of the Japanese natural world, comprising both the expansive sky and the surrounding mountains, as well as the poetic symbol of the ephemeral flower blossom. The mother in "*Ofukuro-san*" is thus not an irrational 'Other' to the Japanese nation, but rather, she constitutes the very epicenter of the Japanese imagined community – its national *kokoro* (heart/soul).

Within the enka imaginary, this national 'heart of Japan' is located in the rural homeland, or *furusato*. As mentioned previously, Christine Yano observes that in enka, the figure of the mother is often conflated with the *furusato*, and thus comes to assume the role of a 'biological *furusato*'. According to Yano, the enka mother, as a 'biological *furusato*', occupies an active female role, one that is "not fragile and passive… but stalwart and active, the practical and emotional backbone of the family. [The enka mother is a] 'country' wom[an] who recuperate[s] a different kind of space within the patriarchy as an active shaper of [her] surroundings"(174). In Yano's employment of the term 'country', it is unclear if she implies that the enka mother is represented as a rural figure or one that is tied to a nationalistic cause. In my interpretation, I would say that both associations ring true within the genre of enka: the mother, tied to the rural *furusato*, is a figure that also espouses nationalistic Japanese values.

I would propose that the particular brand of nationalistic, Japanese values as expressed in the 1971 song, "*Ofukuro-san,*" may be interpreted according to the *nihonjin-ron* rhetoric that pervaded the nation during its post-war era of intensive industrialization and national reconstruction, and into the economic boom time of the 1980's. Within such rhetoric, Edo values of morality, *giri-ninjō* (duty vs. human passion) were alloyed with the remnants of war-time militaristic interpretations of Shintō ideals such as true heart, or *makoto*. As discussed in the opening chapter of this thesis, however, such essential 'Japanese' values were evoked as a means of providing an ideological backing for Japan's largely U.S.-funded national restructuring as a capitalist world power. While *nihonjin-ron* thus seems to appeal to uniquely Japanese cultural traditions and values, these are invoked as part of a self-Orientalistic drive to assert a 'Japanese' character in relation to the encroaching, dominant U.S. culture of global capitalism. Within "*Ofukuro-san*," such stereotypical, or 'self-Orientalized' traditional Japanese ideals (purity, spiritual strength, and true heart) are poetically linked to an imagined Japanese landscape; and the essential spirit of Japan's mother, or 'biological *furusato*' is in turn superimposed upon the Japanese natural world. 'Japanese' spiritual values, the 'Japanese' landscape, and 'Japan's mother' are thus depicted as overlapping poetic layers of a metaphysical experience of nationhood. These poetic layers each constitute essentialized visions of a lost, imagined Japanese 'past' - a translucent and undulating ghostly phantasmagoria of 'Japan' that engulfs the mournful singing subject.

The singer's undulating desire for the past is realized, on a musical level, through his wavering, tearful vibrato, echoed by the accompanying instruments. The vibrato vocal technique may be interpreted as an auditory simulacrum of

Japanese folk music that is sounded within the predominantly westernized musical context of enka. As in the case of the stereotypical 'Japanese' spiritual values evoked in the lyrics, the vibrato technique may be considered a stereotyped imitation of Japanese traditional music.[7] In this sense, the overt usage of vibrato within enka songs such as "*Ofukuro-san*" may be considered an instance of musical self-Orientalism: a stereotype, or simulacrum, of Japanese traditional music that is evoked in order to connote an essentialized 'Japaneseness' in the face of an encroaching western cultural dominance.

The smooth, carefully produced musical context of "*Ofukuro-san*" sets into relief the raw, 'Japanese' vibrato delivered by Mori Shinichi. The mandolin and the accordion both mimic the wavering vibrato; and the entrance of the sweeping string passages cause the weeping of the mandolin to swell, intensifying the sorrowful affect, causing the whole musical context to reverberate with a sense of the weeping vibrato.[8] The musical expression of sorrow, both in the singer's crying voice and echoed in the accompanying instrumentation, is centered on the singing subject's lyrical promise that 'he will never forget' (*wasure wa shinai*). Each verse ends in a restatement of these words, which trail off in an uncertain, weeping vibrato. The quiet, dwindling vibrato at the end of each verse is directly preceded by the hoarse, masculine declamation of the word '*shinjitsu*', that can be translated as 'truth', 'sincerity', or 'true words'.[9] After the stepwise motion leading to the dramatic, climactic statement of '*shinjitsu*', ending on the dominant, the singer's voice wavers down an octave, and then quietly rises an octave again on the words, '*wasurewa*' (forget), before resolving to a quietly wavering vibrato on the tonic minor with the words '*shinai*' (I will not). The promise, 'I will not forget' ('*wasurewa shinai*') is thus grounded in an octave jump on the dominant, solidifying its driving intent, or conviction as a promise that is about to arrive at its final objective, the tonic minor chord. However, in the last two verses, before the statement of '*shinai*' ('I will not') the singer's voice breaks in a gasp, and is overcome by a wavering, uncertain vibrato. The arrival at the tonic minor then trails off on a quiet, weak, weeping vibrato, which serves to call into question the macho bravado of the solid, dominant octave 'promise'. The final extended vibrato trails off, and is enveloped by the sympathetic weeping of the accordion and the entrance of the overlapping zither and sweeping violins. This imparts the effect of the singer's hopeless longing for a past that can never be revived to his satisfaction.

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[7] The vibrato technique employed in enka is referred to colloquially as *kobushi*. This style of vibrato may be traced back to Edo period *kouta*. However, it is worthy to note that many Japanese folk and classical genres, such as *noh* theatre, employ various vibrato vocal techniques. In this sense, *kobushi*, may be interpreted as a kind of simulacrum of Japanese traditional vocal musics. That is, I would argue that *kobushi* is a popular technique that is distanced from its original referents within traditional Japanese culture. While an investigation into the origins and influences that led to the development of *kobushi* would be illuminating, for the purposes of this thesis, I will choose to consider *kobushi* as an evocation of a generic 'Japanese' traditional culture rather than a specific tradition(s).

[8] The mandolin and the accordion are both instruments that have historical associations with enka. Enka was originally performed in seaside towns by *enka-shi* accompanied by the accordion or the mandolin. These were the first western instruments, along with the violin, that were imported into Japan for the purposes of vocal accompaniment. Thus, in the context of "*Ofukuro-san*" the use if these two instruments evokes a sense of 'historical', or Meiji/Taishō era enka..

The singer's uncertain, wavering vibrato, finally enveloped by the accompanying instruments, can be interpreted as his desire to preserve the past being drowned out by the interminable passage of time. The singer's desperate

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[9] *Shinjitsu*, or *makoto*, is a literary aesthetic as well as a cultural value. In literary history, the value of *makoto* can be traced back to the poetry of the *Manyō-shū*, as well as the *haikai* of *Bashō*. In Japanese popular culture, the value of 'honest heart' is commonly referred to as '*sunao na kokoro*', and is considered to be the utmost desirable personal attribute. If one cannot become 'honest at heart' (*sunao ni narenai*) this is considered a personal failing. As an archetypal figure, 'the mother' is often idealized in Japan as the holder of '*magokoro*', or 'devoted, true heart,' with respect to her self-sacrificing devotion to her family.

'promise', to keep the past alive, can be interpreted as an act of auration: that is, an attempt to continuously recreate an imagined 'past' within an ever-unfolding, eternal present. In the context of "*Ofukuro-san*," I would employ the term auration, as opposed to nostalgia, owing to the fact that nostalgia implies a wistful remembrance of the past, whereas auration implies the active desire to (re)create the withering past in the present moment. As we follow the son's poetic gaze in "*Ofukuro-san*," we see that with each glance he aurates his mother into existence within the Japanese natural world, and thus he conjures an imagined past as a constitutive element of the present. The unfolding present moment is conceived of as comprising both the eternal landscape of the sky and the mountains as well as the ephemeral, introspective inner world of the blossom. The 'present' is thus a composite of eternity and brevity, past and present – both are reconceived as timeless present moments.

As the act of auration occurs in response to present anxiety, it follows that the voice of the male singing subject of "*Ofukuro-san*" is driven by a sense of spiritual unease. The son, as sung by Mori Shinichi, is a lost soul, who seeks out his mother's spirit for advice on how to survive, or, how to live in the larger world (*yo no naka*). In response to this plaintive request, the conjured figure of the 'biological homeland' offers spiritual strength and protective shelter form the trials of modern life. The past landscape of a traditional Japan, conceived of as a symbolic 'mother', is thus looked upon as a source of spiritual salvation for the Japanese man who is set adrift in the modern world of confused global cultural flux. This imagined 'past' Japanese homeland, is of course a present construction – a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional values according to post-war, self-Orientalist, *nihonjin-ron* rhetoric. A melded simulacrum of 'Japanese' spiritual values is thus held up as an essential 'past' Japanese ideal. Within a musical dimension, these ghostly spiritual ideals are aurated into their present existence by the combined vocal and instrumental effect of the weeping vibrato – itself a simulacrum of a traditional Japanese musical technique. "*Ofukuro-san*," as an unfolding musico-poetic moment, thus reverberates with an overpowering 'weeping' – and with these undulating waves of sorrow and uncertainty, the soothing ghostly aura of a 'past' Japan is summoned into enka's imaginary.

Boat Song (*Funauta*) (1979)

Although the enka songs discussed thus far, "Apple Folk Song" and "*Ofukuro-san,*" both typify the theme of the 'lost mother', Yashiro Aki's "Boat Song"("*Funa-uta*") is exemplary of the most commonplace enka theme, that of lost love. The particular brand of longing for lost love, or *miren*, that is expressed in enka tends to follow the poetic trope as defined by Koga Masao's early Shōwa songs such as "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" and "Yearning for a Shadow." According to this poetic trope, a lonely singing subject sits alone, presumably at a run-down bar, drowning his or her sadness in drink and is overcome by an uncontrollable sorrow. The frequency with which this trope occurs in enka renders it a veritable thematic *kata*, or patterned form. Yashiro Aki's "Boat Song" follows this thematic *kata* of the lonely drinker, expressed from a male perspective. A female singer's performance of a male voice is a common practice in enka; within this genre, gender itself is a highly stylized, performative *kata*. When considering the emotional experience of sorrow and longing within enka songs, such as “Boat Song,” we must therefore consider the expressed emotions as codified, poetic sentiments rather than the expression of individualistic emotions. That the sorrow expressed in “Boat Song” is a stylized, patterned expression, however, does not mean that its effect upon the listener is diminished. In fact, it may be argued that the channeling of affect through stylized cultural traditions intensifies the communal experience of affective listening. The communal tears shared by an enka audience, in time with the enka performer, can attest to the powerful effect of emotional *kata*.

Within “Boat Song,” the slowly falling tears of the singing subject form the central poetic image, giving rise to a particularly tearful poetic context. The tears that fall from the lonely drinker’s eyes are likened to the drops of sake that are slowly imbibed. This liquid exchange of sorrow is framed by the liminal space of the bar, a place where an imagined past and the present moment collide in an inebriated blur. Enveloping this liminal drinking establishment is the larger, foreboding, unknown space of the ocean, which offers the lonely drinker the possibility, perhaps, of a final release into oblivion.

The ocean figures prominently in “Boat Song” as a poetic setting that is realized in both the lyrics and the accompanying musical context. The introductory musical passage sets this maritime scene with a plaintive melody stated by the oboe, which comes to be enveloped by rolling piano chords. The gentle, reedy, somewhat ‘foggy’ sound of the oboe (possibly with reverberation effects added to blur its sound) may be likened to a musical reinterpretation of a distant foghorn, ringing out across the misty ocean. The entrance of the rhythmic, rolling piano chords sound the ebb and flow of the waves that eventually drown out the distant melody of the foghorn. A harbour scene is thus realized in the musical context of "Boat Song," and this imagined, expansive, undulating musical 'harbour' is juxtaposed to the enclosed space of the bar interior where the lonely singing subject sits. As Yashiro Aki begins to sing the first verse, only a softly strumming guitar and its accompanying bass can be heard in the background (presumably the guitar and bass are instruments that would be played in a bar), along with a distant oboe, suggesting that the foghorn is being sounded beyond the window panes. The introductory musical passage that sets the scene for the first verse thus evokes the surrounding presence of a rolling ocean that engulfs the interior bar scene of the lonely drinker.

At the centre of the musical and poetic structure of this piece is the juxtaposition of two contrasting musico-poetic 'realities', that of the lonely drinker at the bar, and his imagined 'past' envisioned as a 'boat song'. The engulfing waves of the surrounding ocean carry the singing subject from one ontological plane to the other. The lyrics of the opening verse depict the dulled senses of the lonely drinker, who numbs his present reality in order to set into relief the dream world of the 'past'. This 'dulled present' of the first verse is contrasted to the interposing section of the 'boat song' in which the singer relates his desire to return to an ideal past moment, to 'sleep in till late' with his lost love. His dream of the past is seen as soaring high above the muted present moment, symbolized by 'the distant flying gull', a bird that freely soars across the heavens, unfettered by the pull of the crashing waves below. The melody of the contrasting 'boat song' is also imbued with a free-style vocal line, characterized by extended phrasing of syllables and a lilting tempo. Further, it is characterized by a 'Japanese' feel, owing to its *yonanuki* melody[10] that seems to 'rise above' its muted western harmonic accompaniment, consisting of a muted, high-pitched string arrangement, and a subtle bass line. The music of the first verse breaks before the entrance of the boat song, and carried by the high-pitched strings, this free-form melody seems to be suspended above the rest of the song, as suggested by the poetic image of the soaring, distant sea gull. However, with the singer's ironic aside, '*danchone*' (which can be loosely translated, 'as if!') the 'past' dream is brought back down to reality, as the soaring, humming violins are drowned out by the crashing waves of the rolling piano. The tidal pull of the relentless ocean thus returns the drinker to his disconsolate, lack-luster reality.

The singing subject's dulled present reality is characterized by his complete apathy towards all forms of sensual pleasure. In his expression of preference for bland, 'tepid' sake and simple 'broiled squid', the man expresses his indifference towards obtaining any kind of pleasure from his present lived experience. Further, he prefers a woman of few words, indicating that he is indifferent towards any possibility of finding a meaningful connection to another woman in the present moment. In the second verse he expresses his indifference towards the visual and aural dimension of his surroundings, stating that he does not mind if the bar has 'no decorations', and is indifferent to whether or not the bar plays 'the latest tunes'. The drinker thus declares his complete unwillingness to engage with the present through any sensory channel. Rather, his present objective is to continue drinking in order to dull any possibility of sensory engagement with the present moment – for, it is this 'dulling of the present' that enables him to evoke the soaring dream of an imagined past.

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[10] The *yonanuki* scale consists of a western major or minor scale without the fourth and seventh degrees. While the use of *yonanuki* was fairly consistent in Taishō and early Shōwa enka, in contemporary enka this melodic style has been reinterpreted to often retain a 'feel' of the *yonanuki*, while actually employing a western minor scale. The early enka songs that employ a strict *yonanuki* were highly formulaic, and the move away from the strict *yonanuki* may have been a means of composers exploring different harmonic and melodic possibilities within enka. As I am not a student of music theory, or traditional Japanese musics, I do not feel that I am qualified to analyze, in terms of western music theory, the technical aspect of how the *yonanuki* scale is employed in contemporary enka. I believe this would involve an extensive study and the extensive transcription of a large body of enka songs. For the purposes of this thesis, I will thus state that contemporary enka references the *yonanuki* scale without always strictly adhering to its Taishō formula.

The process of dulling the present, and the related evocation of an imagined past, are both facilitated by the drinking of sake. The act of remembering, and the imbibing of sake, are poetically united as parallel, related processes through the use of the same onomatopoeias to describe each process. The Japanese language is replete with various onomatopoeias, and three such literary devices are employed in the lyrics of "Boat Song," to describe the singer's drinking of sake and his acts of evoking the past. In the first verse, the onomatopoeia that is employed is '*shimijimi*', (implying 'silently', or 'gravely'); in the second verse, '*horohoro*' (an imitation of a crying sound); and lastly, '*potsupotsu*' (indicating 'drop by drop', mimicking the sound of falling droplets). The drinker thus drinks his sake down slowly, tearfully, and drop by drop – and as he drinks his liquor down in this manner, the 'past' rises up in an identical, though reverse process.

The act of drinking sake may thus be interpreted as an inverted, processual act of past creation – that is, a continuous act that facilitates the auration of an imagined past into the unfolding present moment. Within “Boat Song,” however, both the aurating subject and the aurated past moment are engulfed by the surrounding ocean. The ocean may be considered a Buddhistic image connoting the endless flow of time. In relation to this eternal flux, the imagined ‘past’ is conceived of as a momentary ‘flight of fancy’, envisioned as the distant flying gull that is precariously suspended on a musical convection current of high-pitched violins. This soaring past moment is inevitably incorporated back down into the rolling waves. Despite the suggested, destructive potential of the ocean waves, curiously, the view of the ocean is the only thing that is desired by the otherwise apathetic singing subject. To the lonely drinker who denies every other aspect of present experience, perhaps the ocean represents a possible fulfillment of his wish to be released from the present moment, into a roaring oblivion where the troubling divide between the past and the present is obliterated once and for all.

Alternatively, the singer’s longing gaze that he casts upon the ocean may be interpreted as his staring out to a distant, imagined, past ‘homeland’. The folk-style melody of the boat song that he sings for his lost love, is in fact a simulacrum of a regional Japanese fisherman’s song. The fact that the drinking man sings of his dream of the past in a regional melody implies that this is perhaps a melody from ‘back home’. In this sense the longing for a lost love is conflated with the longing for a lost Japanese homeland. Whereas in “Apple Folk Song,” the homeland, or *furusato*, is conceived of in terms of a mountain village, “Boat Song” thus presents an imagined sea-side homeland, ~~one~~ of the small fishing villages along the Japanese coast line.

Within “Boat Song,” the ocean thus represents the edge of Japan, a kind of dark oblivion, as well as a comforting fishing village of the lonely drinker’s imagined *furusato*. Gazing out onto the ocean, the singer is thus drawn into his memories of ‘back home’, and his lost love. The ocean is the desired object of his gaze, for it has the power to evoke memories, and thereby facilitate auration as a means of soothing his present feelings of sorrow and loss. Simultaneously, however, the ocean represents the inevitable onward flow of time that drowns out the imagined past and the dulled present into a crashing musico-poetic blur. In “Boat Song” we thus see the drinker’s attempt to conjure a ‘past’ Japan against the flow of time. As he summons the past, he dulls the present, and vice versa, reducing both temporal markers into an inebriated blur that is returned, just as soon as it has arisen, to the depths of the Japanese cultural imaginary.

Conclusion

In his study of the affective potential of nationalism found in literary texts, Benedict Anderson observes that the nation is characterized by a simultaneous ‘newness’ and historicity. This temporal paradox of nationalistic imaginings can be evidenced within enka song, as the imagined national ‘past’ is envisioned as part of an unfolding present musico-poetic moment. Within Misora Hibari’s “Apple Folk Song,” the temporal fissure between the country girl of the rural homeland and the present singing subject is called into question by the singularity of the performer’s voice – thus the ‘past’ voice and the present voice are heard as simultaneously occurring layers of the present. The wavering vibrato employed by Mori Shinichi in his performance of "*Ofukuro-san*" creates an effect of undulating temporality that enables the fluid shift between an imagined 'past' Japanese landscape and the underlying anxiety of the uncertain present moment. "Boat Song," too, presents a musico-poetic context shaped by temporal flux, as Yashiro Aki evokes the voice of a man who drinks to blur the perceived gap between his troubled present and an imagined 'past' dream world. In each of these songs, the phantasm of the nation thus looms as a ghostly evocation straddling the border of present and past, 'newness' and historicity.

The identified 'historicity' of these songs can be located in their conjuring of a Japanese traditional past. In anthropological terms, this imagined past is that of a culturally homogenous society – that is, a Japan that precedes the arrival of western influence. As pointed out in my reading of Gellner, however, the longing for such a cultural homogeneity emerges after its substantive actualization is no longer possible. Accordingly, the elements of homogenous, pre-western Japanese traditions, both musical and literary, that are evoked in enka song are not direct references to Japanese traditional culture, but rather, they are simulacra of this same culture. The seemingly counter-intuitive aspect of the Baudrillardian simulacrum is that, while constituting a cultural sign that is twice or more removed from its original referent, it nonetheless assumes a greater legitimacy when compared to its real-life signifier. And so it is that the hybrid genre of enka, rather than a forgotten regional folk tune, comes to be recognized as 'the voice of Japan', and the symbolic manifestation of the 'Japanese heart'. In such proclamations of nationalistic spirit, however, the nefarious workings of self-Orientalism are at play. The evocation of a simulacrum of Japanese culture is inevitably linked to the assertion of an essentialized vision of 'Japan' in response to the unspoken threat of encroaching western cultural dominance.

The unspoken anxiety that underlies the sad longing of enka may be interpreted as the disquiet experienced by a non-western nation driven by an impossible desire for cultural determinacy and cultural sovereignty in the modern world. The desire for an idealized, pre-western 'homeland' is hindered by the hybrid reality that infuses contemporary Japanese society – the desire for 'Japan' is thus relegated, and sequestered to an imagined 'past', irrevocably fissured from present reality. Paradoxically, however, the imagined homogenous 'past' is a constitutive element of the present, and the temporal rupture that divides this 'past' from the present moment is one that is continuously (re)created in an unfolding present moment.

The aura of 'Japan', as a withered, present ontological deficiency, is thus summoned into existence in the hybrid blend of cultural simulacra that comprise enka song. While feigning to sound the voice of Japanese tradition, the 'Japan' that is realized in enka serves to simultaneously unravel, and wither away at the tradition that it claims to reassert. The ghost of the present thus serves to further distanciate the past; ironically, however, this imagined distance is the required element that keeps the aura alive in its present, withered state. And miraculously, from the ashes of this etiolated aura, rises a vibrant musico-poetic tradition that voices the passions of Japan's ever-unfolding present.

Conclusion: Fore-grounding the Nation

Amid the cacophony that fills the streets and buildings of most Japanese towns and cities is the sound of a distinctive, instantly recognizable music called enka. It may be the background music drifting from the door of a yakitori shop or pachinko parlor or local bar. Often, in smaller towns in the countryside, as well as in the traditional shopping or entertainment areas of Tokyo and other large cities, many shops clustered in one area tune to the same enka cable radio channel, thereby blanketing passersby with the moody music.

Jean Wilson, "Enka: The Music People Love or Hate," 283.

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 220.

Searching for the aura of 'Japan' within enka may be likened to the attempt to uncover a grain of sand by parting a sand dune, or, alternatively, seeking a droplet of water by 'sifting' through an ocean. Often disregarded as a ubiquitous 'background music' of Japan, the hybrid, often-conflicting cultural signifiers inherent in enka's soundscape are often overlooked. The question remains, however, as to whether enka is the music of a traditional Japanese 'past' or a culturally hybrid present? An investigation into the polysemous auditory tapestry that is 'enka' inevitably leads to an examination of the imagined nation that enka foregrounds into existence. The pervasive, yet elusive soundscape of enka is thus likened to the 'heart' or *kokoro* of Japan. The implied organic centrality of this term, *kokoro*, is tied to the imagined aura of the nation itself.

The 'aura', as defined by Benjamin, and as interpreted in this thesis, consists of an imagined quality that can be said to belong to a work of art, or to any type of cultural media. Given that the 'the nation' is often imagined through such cultural media, I have made the polemic assertion that the nation, as a work of the human imagination, is, too, a 'work of art', and moreover, one that evinces a powerful auratic quality. If, however, as Benjamin proclaims, the age of mechanical reproduction has rendered the work of art distanciated from its traditional placement within a historical 'time and space', then it follows that its aura is not only 'withered', it has been ruptured, blown asunder, and thereby rendered endlessly ubiquitous in its etiolated manifestation. So, too, has the aura of the Japanese nation been fragmented across the nebulous soundscape of enka's imaginary. Rather than distill this fragmented aura from each impossible sub-particle of 'Japan', in this thesis my aim has been to identify the processes by which the aura of the Japanese nation is fashioned into existence within the musico-poetic moment of an unfolding present – that is, to identify the aura as possessing a simultaneous lack and wholeness, a symbolic ocean that can be traversed in each imagined drop of water.

The key aspect of this inverted exploration into the ubiquitous, fragmented, 'heart of Japan' has been to re-read Benjamin's theory of the 'aura' from a literary critical perspective. Rather than regard the aura as a withered, 'past' quality, I have thus chosen to reconceptualize the aura as a modern construction, the result of an art critic's attempt to theorize a perceived fissure in the historical development of cultural media in response to technological advances. In my reading of Benjamin, my intent is to show that, from a literary historical perspective, the 'aura' may be read as a cultural product generated by a writer positioned within a given socio-historical context. As a result, what I find most applicable in Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is not so much the idea of the aura itself, but rather, how the essay conjures the idea of the aura. In order to explicate this interpretation of Benjamin's writings, I therefore chose to coin the verb, to 'aurate'.

The question central to this thesis is that of how enka song serves to aurate the Japanese nation into its imagined existence. Examining the process of auration as occurring in Benjamin's noted essay, it was evident to me that the fundamental, requisite condition for auration is the existence of a perceived disjunctive fissure between past and present. While contemporary enka song evidently demonstrates such a disjunctive temporal rupture, in the second chapter of my thesis my aim was to investigate how this imagined divide emerged within enka's imaginary through an examination of historical enka songs. In my analysis of representational enka songs such as "Katyūsha's Song," "Boatman's Ditty," "Tokyo March," "Yearning for a Shadow" and "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" I traced the emergence of an increasing awareness of a troubling disjuncture between an imagined Japanese 'past' and a modern, culturally hybrid present. Whereas early enka such as "Katyūsha's Song," "Boatman's Ditty" and "Tokyo March" express a concern with the negative impact of modern social conditions on the human spirit, later songs such as "Yearning for a Shadow" and "Is Sake Tears or Sighs?" tend to represent such feelings of spiritual anguish in more generic terms - as a result of lost love, rather than an effect of dehumanizing social conditions. Given that enka is a highly patterned, formulaic genre, however, I would claim that the later, more abstract feelings of romantic sorrow expressed in Shōwa enka can be interpreted as stylized emotions that are ultimately rooted in Taishō enka's expressed modern social anxieties. The perceived rupture between a past and a present Japan thus emerges within Taishō enka, and is subsequently abstracted and thus somewhat obfuscated in the early Shōwa era.

In the post-war era, however, enka re-emerges as a mournful genre of popular music that openly conflates the longing for lost love, or a lost 'loved one', such as the mother, with a powerful desire for a traditional Japanese 'past'. The modern anxiety that is first represented in Taishō era enka is thus transmuted into a codified longing for a lost 'Japan'. Within contemporary enka songs, an imagined Japanese 'past' is aurated into existence when the perceived divide between the ideal 'past' and troubled 'present' is blurred in an unfolding moment of impossible longing. Within Misora Hibari's "*Ringo oiwake*," Mori Shinichi's "*Ofukuro-san*" and Yashiro Aki's "*Funauta*," the expressed longing for the past is realized within highly complex musico-poetic dimensions replete with poetic and musical simulacra of age-old Japanese traditions. For example, "*Ofukuro-san*" references the traditional literary aesthetic and Japanese cultural value of *makoto*, or *shinjitsu*, evoked by the use of the musical technique of *kobushi*, a stylized contemporary reference to traditional Japanese folk vocal performance. The evocation of the value of *makoto*, coupled with the vocal vibrato technique may be considered conjured expressions of an essential 'Japaneseness' that is removed from actual Japanese traditions. Likewise, the fictional narrative of the country girl in "*Ringo oiwake*," and the imagined fisherman's regional 'boat song' in "*Funauta*," are ghostly evocations that suggest an imagined Japanese past, without referencing a real historical Japanese moment.

Such musico-poetic evocations of an essential Japanese 'past' are invariably wrapped in folds of undulating paradox, layered as diaphanous extensions of interlacing simulacra. Within the context of this thesis, I have identified three possible theoretical models that may be employed in conjunction for the purpose of analyzing the logical incongruities that constitute enka's present auration of a 'past' Japan: the Andersonian paradox of the nation's 'simultaneous newness and historicity'; the Gellnerian desire for 'impossible homogeneity'; and lastly, the counter-intuitive processes of self-Orientalistic identity formation. As the various musical and poetic references to a 'past' Japan serve to aurate the nation into existence within enka song, various paradoxical incongruities are resolved within a suspended musical moment of an ever-unfolding present. This suspended moment is at once past and present, culturally homogenous and hybrid, Japanese and Western, and yet, paradoxically, it is simultaneously *none of these* – the aura eludes in the moment it is conjured. The fascination of the paradox, however, guides the listener's ear along a stream of complicated desire that characterizes the present moment of uncertainty. While it is true that enka's ubiquitous, mass-disseminated, paradoxical imaginary is characterized by a Benjaminian 'lacking in time and space', it is also the overtly 'present' background music to the Japanese nation. In the end, my aim is not to recuperate enka from this ambivalent, paradoxical ontology, but rather to reveal it in all of its uncertain, withered glory, and ultimately to fore-ground 'Japan' by uncovering the roots of its impossible longing.

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Appendix A - Enka Lyrics

Appendix – Selected Enka Lyrics in Translation[1]

Katyūsha's Song (*Kachyūsha no uta*) (1914)

Words: Shimamura Hōgetsu and Sōma Gyōfu
Music: Nakayama Shimpei

Katyūsha, dear one,
O, the hardness of parting!
At least before the thin snow melts
Let's say a prayer – la – la – to the *kami* (god).

Katyūsha, dear one,
O, the hardness of parting!
The snow that falls from twilight into the night
Will coat the road – la la – running through the fields and mountains.

Katyūsha, dear one,
O, the hardness of parting!
At least until we meet again
Keep your same – la la – appearance.

Katyūsha, dear one,
O, the hardness of parting!
Between the tears of a hard farewell
The wind will blow through the fields – la la – the sun will set.

Katyūsha, dear one,
O, the hardness of parting!
Wandering distraught through the wide fields
Alone I will go out – la la – on tomorrow's journey.

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[1] All translations are my own. In these translations I have attempted to directly translate the Japanese lyrics, rather than reworking them into an English poetic context.

The Boatman's Ditty (*Sendō kouta*) (1921)

Words: Noguchi Ujō
Music: Nakayama Shimpei

I am the withered *susuki* grass
along the riverbank.
You are the same withered *susuki* grass
along the riverbank.
In this world, us two
Are withered *susuki* grasses -
never to flower.

Hey, what do you think:
Aren't life and death the same as the flow of water?
So let's you and me live
As boat people on the Tone river.

The withered grasses are lit by
Mr. Moon over *Itako.*[2]
I am going to live from now on
As a boatman on the Tone river.

Why does the cold wind blow?
From these two of withered grasses
When hot tears fall
Please scoop them up, Mr. Moon.
(Or: Please, carry us on, as you do the water, Mr. Moon.)

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[2] *Itako* is a city known for its canal system. It is located in Ibaraki prefecture, roughly 45 minutes by train from Tokyo.

Tokyō March (*Tokyō kōshinkyoku*) (1929)

Words: Saijō Yaso
Music: Nakayama Shimpei

The Ginza willow that longs for the past,
(Or: O, Ginza willow, how you make me long for the past,)
The bitterness of an older woman – who knows of such things today?
Dancing to jazz, and drinking liqueurs late into the night,
When the sun rises, all that's left is a dancer's rain of tears.

Over there, through that window in the tall building of love,
There are people doing paper work through their tears.
The rose I picked up off of the ground in rush hour,
I would at least like to keep as a memory of my sweetheart.

Just as Tokyō is expansive, the love in this town is small.
Colourful Asakusa, is where we are headed - to meet without fear.
You catch the subway, and I catch the bus -
Our stop of love is soon approaching.

Should we go to the cinema or should we have a cup of tea?
Or should we run away on the next Oda line?
How Shinjuku has changed, even that famous Musashino's[3]
Moon now rises above the roof of a department store.

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[3] Musashino is a city in Tokyo.

Is Sake Tears or Sighs? (*Sake wa namida ka tameiki ka*) (1931)

Words: Takahashi Kikutarō
Music: Koga Masao

Is sake tears or sighs?
It is the place where I throw the troubles of my heart.

My distant soul-mate,
O the loneliness of my nightly dreams.

Is sake tears or sighs?
It is where I throw my sad heart (*kokoro*).

The forgotten lips of my love.
What do I do with the feelings I have left for her?

Yearning for a Shadow (*Kage o shitaete*) (1932)

Words and Music: Koga Masao

I yearn for a phantom shadow, and not the rain, the day,
Nor the moon will cause my feelings to waver.
The more I stifle it, the more it burns - this fire in my breast.
With all my being I yearn for love - I hide away and cry.

O, sorrow…
As a momentary comfort to my pain,
I pick up my guitar, and begin to pluck its strings.
Endless drizzle, the autumn gone by,
A weeping tremolo - I am sad with my whole being.

I was meant to live a long life, but you alone have shrouded my life in darkness,
Never will I see the spring, this is my fate.
Will it last much longer? Like an empty cicada shell,
This ephemeral shadow - that is all that is left of my love.

Chapter 3 – Contemporary Enka

The Past (*Mukashi*) (2003)

Performed by: Miyako Harumi
Words: Aku Yū
Music: Uzaki Ryūdō

In the past, in the past, in the distant past,
There were only good things, so they say.
Truly, truly,
The past was full of only good things,
'The past' is really something amazing…

Are you sure there isn't a ghost that has latched onto your room?
A little one, so little it can fit in your hand?
This endearing ghost -
Its name is 'The Past'.
If you by chance allow this ghost to latch on to you,
That'll be the end of you!
You ask me why - well, it's because this ghost is a fairy tale,
And it makes you feel good with lies like this:
　　'On that day, once upon a time, you were strong.'
　　'On that day, once upon a time, you were wise.'
　　'On that day, once upon a time, you were happy.'
With its 'once upon a time, 'once upon a time',
It whisks you off into a wistful dream, and that will be the end of you!
So you better watch out,
For that pesky ghost called 'the past'.

But I bet you've already
Let 'the past' into that room, haven't you?
Yeah, I bet you drink good *sake* with it every night,
Happily chatting with your dear little ghost.
It's not too late, get rid of it now!
Otherwise, you will lose your tomorrow.
You ask me why – well, I know because that same ghost was over at
my place until just a little while ago!

'On that day, once upon a time, you were strong.'
'On that day, once upon a time, you were wise.'
'On that day, once upon a time, you were happy.'
With its 'once upon a time', 'once upon a time',
It whisks you off into a wistful dream, and that will be the end of you.
So you better watch out,
For that pesky one called 'the past'.

Apple Folk Song (*Ringo oiwake*) (1952)

Performed by: Misora Hibari
Words: Ozawa Fujio
Music: Yoneyama Masao

When the petals of the apple blossom flutter in the wind
In the moonlit night, in the moonlit night, gently…

The Tsugaru girl cried, so they said,
Cried over a hard farewell, so they said.

When the petals of the apple blossom flutter in the wind. Ah…

"When them there white cotton clouds come rollin' over the peak of Mount Oiwaki, and the peach blossoms and the cherry blossoms and those earliest little apple blossoms bloom – that's the best season for us lot, I'm sure.
But then, when that no-good rain comes along and causes the white blossoms to flutter, well I, I, I can't help but think back about my poor old mamma that died in Tokyo, and I – I …"

The Tsugaru girl cried, so they said,
Cried over a hard farewell, so they said.

The Tsugaru girl cried, so they said,
Cried over a hard farewell, so they said.

When the petals of the apple blossom flutter in the wind. Ah…

Mother (*Ofukuro-san*) (1971)

Performed by: Mori Shinichi
Words: Kawauchi Kōhan
Music: Inomata Tadashi

O mother, dear mother,
If I look up to the sky, you are there, in the sky.
When it rains you become my umbrella.
'One day, when you go off into the world
You, too, must become an umbrella for someone.'
This is what you taught me.
Your.. your honest words (*shinjitsu*)
I will never forget.

O mother, dear mother,
If I gaze into a flower, you are there, in the flower.
The life of a flower is short,
Oh! but the purity of the flower's heart… (*kokoro*)
You taught me to live strong
Your… Your.. honest words (*shinjitsu*)
I will never forget.

O mother, dear mother,
If I look up to the mountains, you are there, in the mountains.
When it snows you give warmth.
'One day, when you go off into the world
You, too, must shine love on someone.'
You taught me
Your.. your… honest words (*shinjitsu*)
I will never forget.

Boat Song (*Funauta*) (1979)

Performed by: Yashiro Aki
Words: Aku Yū
Music: Hattori Katsuhisa

For sake, I'm fine with the tepid kind.
For a snack, I'm fine with broiled squid.
For a woman, I prefer one with few words.
As for the lights, it's alright if they're dim.
When I drink silently, then silently, (*shimijimi to*)
Memories wash over me.
If a tear drop should fall,
Then I will start to sing -
A fisherman's boat song.

I'll raise a stiff drink to that gull, flying distant off the shore.
Oh, how I want to be sleeping in till late tomorrow morning,
With that beautiful girl I once loved... hmph, as if! (*danchone*)

For a bar, I like one with no decorations -
As long as I can see the harbour from the window, that's fine.
As for the latest tunes, they don't need to play anything like that,
As long as I can hear a foghorn every now and then, that's fine.
If I drink tearfully, then tearfully, (*horohoro to*)
My heart weeps.
And when I think of that girl,
I will start to sing -
A fisherman's boat song.

If I drink drop by drop, then drop by drop, (*potsupotsu to*)
A longing (*miren*) comes dancing back into my chest.
And when the night grows late and lonely,
I will start to sing -
A fisherman's boat song.

Ru ru ru ….